

# ***The Beat Within***

***A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside***



***Volume 9:21***



***"Morphing Icon"***

***Art By Michael Orozco***



**G**reetings you loyal Beat editor's note readers, we're so glad you are curious enough to read this page of words, aka spillage, that we loyally drop on you with each priceless issue of The Beat Within. We do hope it makes some sense. It is strictly our goal to give you an idea about where our heads are, as well as an idea about what to expect from us in this issue, and sometimes, even in the future.

With that said, there is a host of challenges to getting this work done in The Beat office, especially these days, so we find ourselves working on The Beat from our homes, in the shower (as we think about what topics to present), from the road, in a hotel room, even on vacation when we should be enjoying our time away from the office. In truth, it's hard to escape! It's been hard to escape since the beginning of Beat time, especially when you are committed to getting the product out each and every week.

Well, before we go further, we thought we'd include the email we received from one of our colleagues this past weekend, whom was on a beautiful birthday weekend excursion. In the note he says, "I wanted to tell you that I read this week's Beat (Issue 9.20) this morning (while sitting next to the Truckee River), and, as always, was moved to tears by the quality of our publication, and by some individual pieces of incredible power. I found D-Boy's piece ('Rise And Shine') to be one of the best, instructive and far-thinking pieces we've ever published. Even if I don't share his love for big money, I love what he says about how to get it — and how not to get it. This is leadership at its best. God, he's good."

"I also think everyone in the Hall today should be made to read Nick Floyd's piece describing Santa Rita County Jail. It's a dash of ice water in the face that might actually have an impact on some youngster before he or she has to learn the lesson personally."

Finally, Richard Ruiz's piece, 'Decision Making,' is so, so sad and so, so good. Damn!"

When we read this email we couldn't help but feel a sense of pride about what we have created, by giving a voice to these important writers/teachers, who, unfortunately have taken a bad fall (somewhere) and now find themselves in this predicament. We've created an incredible outlet for many folks who shed immense light on their lives for us readers to absorb, to learn from, and to realize that they're not alone. (Where would these hundreds and hundreds of writers be if there wasn't a Beat to share their gifts/stories in?) We've learned over the years how valuable it is to not feel so alone in a world where, for the most part, you are alone, alone in a cell. This is the world known as incarceration — a very lonely world. A world where all you truly have is yourself. Sure, you have some friends, some associates, some support, if you're lucky, but all-in-all it is you and only you doing time, hard time.

So, giving writers and artists such an outlet is critical, not just so the creators can shed light, but so our many, many readers can learn from them.

For close to ten years we have been one of the most consistent fixtures/programs in the lives of many of our contributors. One such person is our old friend, Neil Butler, whom we have known for many years. Almost as long as there has been a Beat, there has been Neil respectfully sharing his opinions, art, thoughts, flows, ideas and stories.

Neil has always wanted the love, support and guidance necessary to make it out of the life. Unfortunately, he felt immense pressure to go the other way, to live life on the edge. So he constantly ended back up in San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center (twenty-plus times), fighting violations and drug cases, and eventually, getting sent off to numerous placements, the Ranch, etc., until the system ran out of options/placements and he was eventually sent off to the CYA for close to two years.

Upon his parole last winter 2003, Neil, sadly, could not even stay out a month, even with community support he violated his parole. A big turning point in his downfall was the murder of one of his closest friends, nevertheless, he allowed himself to fail, falling prey to the streets. So Neil was eventually hauled back in on a CYA violation.

Six months later, Neil was released back into the San Francisco community, and today he is back in our Beat office — more determined than ever — waiting for an open slot to work in our office.

Today we see a young man wanting to be saved from the ills of the 'hood. We see a young man who is tired of the hustle, the life that has taken too many young men of color to either an early grave or the pen'.

There is no telling how Neil will respond, yet, the early indication is that he wants a better life, and if we at The Beat can play a vital role in his success, count us in, Neil is so worth it. (Aren't you?) He is a young man who is very articulate and engaging, who is very hungry to shed light on the young writers and readers of The Beat. We are determined to see that happen, too.

There is so much here at The Beat to confront, especially financially. We have to do it soon, too. We have to confront the cutbacks, the layoffs, the changes. (But who, but where?) It is our goal to start our new programming in July after our fourth of July break in the action.

Next week we are going up to Sacramento to put on two panels for legislature and other policy makers regarding surviving inside and succeeding upon reentry from juvenile and CYA. We are conducting the panels and are having some of our young people sit on these panels to tell their stories (on what works and what could have been better), and answer the audience's questions. This could be a very moving and interesting program given that each story is oh so different about how one comes to terms inside and out. Just like each tale in The Beat Within, they are all the same, yet every single piece is different.

Our colleagues — be they in the hall, in the office, or in

the back pages of The Beat, known as The BWO (Beat Without) — touch us tremendously. This week a host of BWO writers are first-time contributors, and boy, they write as if they've been contributing to The Beat for years. Their pieces teach so much, and they complement our old school writers beautifully. You're really in for a treat!

This is such a beautiful working relationship: The Beat Within program/publication and the relationships we have with so many talented writers, who, if it weren't for this program, would never know how important they truly are, and wouldn't have a place to vent, share, create, step up and teach and learn. Plus, this outlet is not a yearly anthology, not a quarterly, not a bimonthly, not a monthly, not a biweekly, no, it's a straight up weekly that comes at you loaded with game every fricken week! So, if you miss a Beat this week, there will always be next week, with the potential of new breakout writers and artists, as well as the return of our favorite mainstays, like our cover artist, the incredibly talented Michael Orozco! We're so honored to have Michael back! We'll share more on Michael next week! Enough!

This week the topics addressed in the workshops leading up to the writing in this issue were: 'Cycles In Your Family — Abusive relationships, drug use, alcoholism, violence, incarceration, hiding emotions, lack of a father figure, abusive father/mother, smoking, yelling, swearing, etc.

Cycles like these occur in almost all families. Sometimes we don't notice that they're taking place, and other times, the cycle is as clear as day.

Families have good cycles as well, such as high school graduation, good parenting, college, family reunions, knowledge of family history, healthy eating habits, etc.

Now, take a look at your own family for a second . . . do you see any cycles that have been playing out over the years? Is the reoccurring pattern good or bad? Has anyone ever addressed any of these issues? Have you or anyone in your family ever broken a cycle? What family patterns would you like to see broken and which ones would you like to see strengthened?"

Our second topic was "A Letter To Yourself — If you could take a step outside yourself and get a better/different perspective on your life and everything that's happening right now, how would you encourage yourself? Keeping this in mind, if you had a chance to write a letter of encouragement to yourself, what would that letter say? Lots of other people can and will give you advice, but what advice would you give yourself?"

Lastly, the open ended "In my world . . ."

From all the writing in this amazing issue, we found a number of stellar pieces, well, more than stellar, we call them, as you know, POWs (Pieces of The Week). These writers step up huge as they speak/write so courageously from the heart. If we could collectively give them a rousing round of applause, we would. They truly deserve great praise for their work. Instead, let's give thanks in this ed note! Thank you this week's POW writers, from the 150 Crew, Juanita, Lil' LC, Tishay, Fireball, and Lil' Youngin'; from San Francisco's YGC, R. Jae and Cruz; from Marin, Tim and Kd; from San Mateo, Broken Glass, Kurrupt (2 pieces), The Hulk, and Spooky, and from San Luis Obispo, Unknown.

There is so much to grasp in this issue, POWs, CoPOWs, standouts, BWOs, artwork and much, much more. Shhh, you even get this wordy editor's note, and a special contest question to consider for cash prizes! This, by the way, is our tenth editor's note writing contest. The question is, what is your all-time favorite movie and why. We are curious about why this movie moves you so much. Tell us how it relates to you. Tell the readers about a time, maybe the first time, you saw the movie. We want the inviting details about why this movie will always have an important place on your movie shelf/heart. Be creative when painting the picture of this special, special movie.

With this said, the contest deadline for submissions is July 31, 2004. We will award four prizes/money orders for our favorite pieces. Our top prize is a \$100 money order for first place. Followed by a \$50 money order for second place, and for third and fourth place, \$25 money orders. With this said, good luck writers in attempting to create a moving and telling piece about your all-time favorite movie. We encourage all of you editor's note readers to take this topic on! Now take us to the movies!

All right, we've said plenty this week, and we still have plenty to do — there is no rest here at Beat headquarters. We have plenty of young people to work with in our office and in the hall. We have our own lives to sort out, too.

"Summer's here, the time is right for dancing in the streets!" Aren't those the lyrics Martha and the Vandals dropped on us? We do hope that this summer brings joy, love, and good vibrations to our communities that are plagued with cruel gun violence that is ruining many lives. What is it about the streets that brings out this violence and hate? Why are so many of you caught up in this web of death and incarceration? What will it take for the violence to cease? When will you all get tired of what E-Money in The BWO writes/calls, "Disease, Disrespect, Violence, and Death?" We hope you get the chance to retire from a game that has no winners, yet has plenty of negative complications.

Lastly, this magnificent issue goes out to our colleague and friend, Neil Butler, who realizes that there is a much better road to go down, than the road he was on for oh too many years. This issue's for you, Neil. We admire your courage and support your desire to change. We must say, if you do it, we're sure, in time, a few more will follow suit, and then others will follow them, and so on. Wouldn't that be nice!

Take care readers of The Beat, we'll see you next week!

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**The Beat Within**, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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[www.thebeatwithin.org](http://www.thebeatwithin.org)

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### **Understanding My Life**

Hey, what's up Beat? How y'all doing? Me, cool — just got court on the 28th. It was supposed to be my last court but I'm hearing that it will be continued and I still got a shot at CYA.

I've been here for four months and two weeks. I see my mom twice a week, getting really boring. We never know what to say.

I know a lot of people say they live a life worse than me. I don't believe that. Try walking around with pain always on your back. Got no money. To me, the world is a dog-eat-dog world. A lot of people think it's cool to be in here, that it makes you tough. It does nothing to you. I feel like a dumb ass, a loser and more 'cause I'm wasting my time in here and not with my familia.

Me, I'm stronger by my mind, health, and physically. I tell people to look into my eyes and tell me what you see. It won't be a life with peace, more like a life of death with a lot of loved ones dying around you and pain everywhere you go. I wanna see you walk around with pain on your back. It's not wonderful striving to be someone and trying to survive. I wonder who really knows what life is?

I was always alone. No one ever stuck a hand to help me except my 'hood — "mi familia." I love them to the fullest.

Life is not a thing that we are not all promised to see tomorrow, like it says in the Bible, just like a lot of my respected homies that passed away (RIP). What can I say? Life's a survivor to me.

People tell me, you're a good kid, why don't you live a wonderful life? I say live the steps I live and handle the pain I live. It's not wonderful. No one can really say they understand. I see my family, homeboys and home girls, leave from here and I hope they move on. Mi familia comes in and out, so I stay here in hell all by myself, no one to speak to or anything. I'm my own leader, not a follower.

It's not good waking up after a good dream and seeing a steel door sucking it up and just sticking a finger at you so that you can't get out. It makes some people go insane.

Me, I lived a life with no one that was there for me. I was always alone. A lot of people don't really understand life or their priorities, why they are alive. I always tell myself why I'm alive, why do I have to suffer? I have never cried in my life — maybe some, but for family.

Me, I'm not really welcome in my house. My family don't like me in the house. If anything is missing they blame me, no one else. I lost their respect and trust. My life in the Hall, not having anything to really get out for, always stressing, looking out my window and looking past everything to see what's really out there and just wishing I was reborn again.

#### **-Spooky, San Mateo**

**From The Beat:** This is an agonizing piece to read. The writing is so gut-wrenching, so straight from the heart, and so laced with sadness that we can't help but feel it ourselves. Though you've got it bad — and worse than any of us can know — we don't think you've got it worse than anyone else. You're healthy, and your facing time that will be over in a few years. We meet young men and women in workshops and via mail that are spending their lives in prison — even some who have been there in order to be put to death — and we're positive that many of them would jump at the chance to change places if they could. However, that doesn't make take away the pain you feel. What will it take to start picking the pieces of your life back up? What will it take to find something to look forward to, something that brings a smile to your face — even if only for a second? There is more to life than the pain you feel.

**To all y'all  
guys/females  
out there:**

**Wear condom/  
birth control  
so you won't  
end up in this  
predicament.**

### **To My Unborn Child**

I'm writing this to you because I love you. I'm sorry that me and your mom couldn't keep you. I wasn't for the abortion. I wanted to keep you, but it was your mom's decision.

We were still young, not old enough to have a baby. How could we take care of another human when we are still strugglin' trying to take care of ourselves? I'm still on probation, still livin' with my parents, no job, and I'm not even eighteen yet. We just want to be able to raise you right and properly, but we aren't able to do that right now at this point in time.

It's not like we're getting a pet puppy that you feed, play with, and clean up. It's a real human being. If we kept you, me and your moms will really be strugglin', and might have to be on the streets, 'cause if our family knew we was having a baby they'll say, "If you're old enough to have it, you're old and responsible to raise it." They wouldn't even let us stay under their roof.

Me and your mom went to Planned Parenthood to get the abortion, and I noticed there were so many young girls my age there. I even saw a girl that was like just becoming a teenager. Then I tripped for a second.

There were like 20 girls having an abortion, and I was the only guy there. They were all by themselves, but I was with your mom supporting her through the whole thing. But all of those girl's baby daddies wasn't. Them ninjas probably had some more important stuff to do (in their mind).

I sometimes get sad and depressed 'cause I wonder what if... What if you became the President, or a singer, or actor, athlete, genius, or the next Bill Gates. I'll never know. I miss you and I wish we were able to keep you. I was willing to take care of you and raise you right. I Love You!

To all y'all guys/females out there: Wear condom/birth control so you won't end up in this predicament.

#### **-R.Jae YTEC, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** This is perhaps the best piece we have ever read on this very emotional subject. Despite the obvious pain you are still suffering, we believe you made the right and truly responsible decision both for yourselves and, believe it or not, for your unborn child. You weighed out what would be good and bad, and what is the most reasonable thing to do, and came out with a solution that you both understood. We wish everyone your age, in the system and out, could read this very grown up piece, and think about it whenever they're thinking of having unprotected sex. There is more at stake than just that passing pleasure.

Much more. We know how hard this was (and still is) for you, so we want to tell you how grateful we are to you for sharing it with.



## Time

My life hasn't been nothing but the opposite of what I wished. Instead of throwing the desk at the teacher and saying screw you, I should have done my work. She was just trying to teach me.

Instead of jacking that foe, I should have just helped him with instructions. He didn't know where he was at. Instead of getting drunk and smoking weed with my potnas, I should have been at home doing homework or at basketball or football practice working on my skills instead of killing my skills.

If only I would have went home instead of doing all that dangerous and gangsta stuff, I probably would have had a better life.

If only I knew my parent's advice was good and my potnas advice was fake, and even tho' I didn't listen, my mom still stays by my side through thick and thin.

If I could have one wish from God, it wouldn't be money, advice, help, or fame, guns, nothing but to rewind time.

I wish I could die and start over, but I can't. I can't help but to look back and say, why did I do that? And it's only hurting me in the long run.

If only I could rewind time I would be a more mature and better person inside and out, but I can't, so I pray for a better day.

**-Lil' Le, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Thanks for being real with us and yourself. Now, we have to be real with you. Saying if this and if that is useless. Maybe, if you had done things differently you could have been saved from this fate, but such thoughts are only self-torture. Think about the future and how you can avoid making the same mistake twice. There's no point in looking back — look ahead! YOU have tremendous skills as a writer and teacher push yourself to learn, learn, and learn. Prepare yourself for the day you are released, so you will be ready to live on a legit path, making you and your mom proud.

## A Letter To Me

Dear Juanita,

This is a letter to you, basically to remind yourself of what they say statistically about Black women and the Black community.

They say that Blacks are dumb, ignorant, and can't do for themselves. They say Blacks will never have businesses for themselves, they say that we don't support other Blacks, and will kill and destroy over a peace of land. They say that we are the best drug dealers and the best prostitutes.

Well think to yourself, how can you make a difference? How can you show others that Black women can be and are, doctors, lawyers, designers, electricians etc.?

We have to break that statistic quote. We have to buy from our Black stores and bring money to the community, weather it is just a corner store or a Black owned store.

Juanita you're young and have young peers. Show them that just 'cause your young you know the cycle and you want to break it. Tell them about positive Blacks, and remind yourself of this and let this push yourself in everyway.

Keep your head up go to school until you can't no more. Try to get every degree out there, show them your talented in many ways, besides what they say. Show them that we are only doing what they want us to do; they don't think we can do without welfare, without drugs without them over our own shoulder. Think Juanita, you have a meaning.

**-Juanita, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Juanita, you have a very, very powerful message here. This letter could benefit the whole Black community and beyond. Everyone could learn something from your wise words. This letter is very inspiring. We should all have a copy of this in our pockets, and when things get rough, or we are feeling down, pull it out. Then we could find our focus, and realize we all have meaning. Great on topic writing!

**just 'cause your  
young you know  
the cycle and you  
want to break it.**

## To Me, Myself And I

Dearest Fireball,

What's up girl? It's me getting at 'cha, the first time I been really worried about you. I heard you back in the Hall again. Baby girl, you about to be eighteen years old — ain't you getting tired of this shhh? It ain't all fun and games no more. You need to start tryin' to get yo' shhh back together.

And what's up with the whole pimpin' and ho'ing shhh? I remember you once told me "Can't no ninja run yo' life let alone get yo' papa." Baby, I understand you trying to get money, but selling yo' body on the corner? Come on baby, you way better than that.

You say you love the game, baby? The game don't love you no more than it loves me. And what happened with yo' moms? I know you and her got yo' differences, but baby girl you only got one mom. You need to realize that she loves you boo.

You are only hurting yourself. You looking for love in all the wrong places. Baby, in order for you to find love you have to love yourself first. I just hope you realize how much you are worth. Stop letting the streets put you down. Rise above that shhh. Have yo' own money and do it the right way. Then, at the end of the day, at least you can lay yo' head down at night and know you did something right.

I know it might seem like the end of the world, but baby you can do it. You once said you wanted to dance, and I seen you get down — you got skills girl. I wish I could dance like you baby girl. You're young, black, cute-as-hell and so smart — you too good for this shhh baby. God didn't put you on this earth to ho. That was not yo' purpose. God doesn't want you to give yo' money to a pimp and get beat up being on the streets for no good reason. Baby girl, just get yo' shhh together before it is too late.

Love always,

**-Fireball, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** This is such a powerful letter. You really should listen to yourself. When things get rough, listen to yourself; remember how you felt when you wrote this. You know what's right for you. You know what you got to do. Don't doubt yourself; don't let your addiction to the game get the best of you. You're a strong girl, believe in yourself, listen to your advice, and most of all remember, you're young, smart, black, and more than determined to better yourself — you too good for this!

**My Life**

**(a poem in two parts)**

(1)

my life has so many different parts  
that i don't really know where to start  
well when i was young  
i really couldn't play or have fun as a child  
so when i got to that age of hanging out  
— i went wild  
nothing could slow me down  
out and about  
never in the house  
having fights back to back  
i felt i had to have it  
to prove myself  
labeled as a savage  
made so many mistakes  
but still took chances  
i never looked at it as being a given  
i took advantage  
messing with ninjas till i choked  
messed around to gettin' my heart broke  
i have always smoked  
you know stayed high  
i didn't want to face the real world  
'cause it was hard to get by  
and it always made me cry  
but i had to go for what i wanted  
so i hustled  
sellin' weed through coke  
i just couldn't be broke  
i got what i needed  
i didn't care  
if i left a ninja bleedin'  
i have been through  
and had differences  
but not like this one i'm experiencing  
had my whole life in the palm of my hand  
then it slipped out  
now i'm in juvenile hall prayin'  
promisin' to stop the sinnin'  
'cause it was my life i was playin'  
but now i'm sayin'  
that it's only fair  
'cause if this wouldn't've happened to me  
i wouldn't've known a life as being there  
and time to think what i'd never thought  
and there are things i know now  
that would've never been taught  
so i see things in me  
that thug life and the devil fought  
i conduct myself  
with more consciousness and restraint  
in what i do and in what i say  
and so i will still say it again  
you only get out of life what you put in  
and i'm gon' do it right  
'cause this is my life

(2)

growin' up came too fast  
i learned the street life  
before my fourteenth birthday passed  
and when teen age hit  
i was around older groups doing it big  
'cause i wasn't into young'ins  
with them my maturity didn't fit  
but i stayed goin' to parties  
doing what i wanted to do  
i was to the age where it was too late  
nobody could tell me what to do  
i was like fuhgit what they goin' through  
i had to have money  
i didn't play too many games  
so to me everything wasn't always funny  
hustlin' sellin' whatever product  
loaded they wanted  
i sold it  
i had to bounce back  
shhh was gettin' cold  
i had to get what pleased myself  
didn't matter if i left a ninja needin' help  
or who i hurt  
stayed on my feet  
expectin' the worst  
see i'm a girl  
but ninjas respected me  
i was nicknamed felonie  
did this did that  
i can't lie  
everything came back  
that's why  
i'm where i'm at now  
'cause everything i was holdin'  
held me down  
i couldn't just be soft and sweet  
i was hard and complicated  
like rough meat  
you had to struggle with me  
they always said and i believed  
i was sharp  
and everything i did  
was with a unique spark  
but now it's that time  
to find another part  
before it be too late with my life  
lights out in the dark

**-Tishay, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You are sharp and always will be. We see it each week in your poetry. But what you didn't have, was the wisdom to go with it. Without maturity and wisdom, intelligence just gets twisted, especially once you're enlisted as a hustler in the game. Intelligence can't erase the pain, but it can maintain you have the right to hurt others all the same: 'cause it's part of the game you call survival. Till one day you hit what they call a bottom, and your heart breaks. Too many problems for you to solve 'em; or too many mistakes keep repeatin' and you lose your freedom. Or you can't go on but don't know how to stop; yeah, the bottom's like hitting your head on solid rock. Depression follows. You feel so hollow and broken, you can hardly hear a word that's spoken. It feels like the end, but it's really just rebuilding then, from the bottom up. And the unique spark that lives in Tishay's heart, shines like a light that guides the way from the dark of night to a brighter day. There's no one left to watch your back, so you face that fact and act: change your hustle, exert your mental muscle, marry intelligence to wisdom, make better decisions until you know you're winning at this new beginning and the next part of your life starts to spinning!

**you only get out of life what you put in  
and i'm gon' do it right**

## Goodbye

It's the end of the road  
no more performances  
it's the end of the show  
after eleven months  
it's time for me to go.  
Right now  
I must separate  
what's real and what's fake  
for my own sake  
it's a risk I'm going to have to take.  
No more saying what  
I'm going to do  
I'll have to prove it now  
now more excuses  
because now I know how.  
Out there  
there will be no more staff  
telling me to put my hands behind  
my back  
no more orange t-shirt  
or shoes with no ties  
no more watery eyes  
after this last goodbye.  
No need to fight in the bathroom  
or get sent down to your room  
because I'll be home soon.  
It seemed as though I would never  
see the day  
when they'd buzz that door  
and I could walk away.  
It's a Kodak moment,  
a new birth  
a day  
a million times I've rehearsed.  
Some things I will miss  
like my patnas to talk with  
or Mr. Prince to clown with,  
too all my folks, you'll be missed  
we've made it to the end of this!  
To The Beat thank you for keeping  
me on my feet  
every lesson I've learned  
I'll keep  
and pass them on  
to the youngstas in the streets.  
To all the staff  
who kept me in line  
who made this a home  
instead of dead time  
like Mr. Sa'adat  
no words can express  
all you given me  
you helped me when I was in need  
I was drying dirt  
and you planted the seed  
now I'm a mountain statue  
because of you  
I love you and thank you.  
Ms. Reed, Tubby, Prince, Mitch and  
Mr. Brown  
thanks for picking me up

when I was down  
when I needed a hand  
you were always around.  
To all my other folks,  
Ms. Bereley, Ms. McDuffy, Ms.  
McClure  
Ms. Moore, Ms. G  
Ms. Pryor, Big Swiss  
remember all the times we  
discussed this?  
Mr. Kennon and Mr. Wright  
much love for keeping it tight  
y'all got my brain working right.  
Bye Lucy, I love you  
and Blanca, you too  
and Jen, I don't know what  
I would do  
without you.  
Ariel keep your head up  
and out of that gang stuff  
you should slow down and live life  
there's no rush.  
Peace out Youn1 and  
'tha sidekick' Thinzle Washington  
Mr. Charles and Mr. White  
my buddy Mr. Clark (aka Big Head)  
Leonard, too  
everyone else, I'll miss you too  
even if I forgot you.  
I wipe the last tears  
and close the door to my old cell  
read my inappropriate mail  
and bail.  
I smile and drive away,  
for the last time wave goodbye  
leaving behind the pain  
and leaving here as a young lady  
with a beautiful life ahead . . .  
goodbye.

### -Broken Glass, San Mateo

*From The Beat:* There are writers who have indelibly marked their presence on The Beat over the years — through some combination of their willingness to probe themselves, to look inside, to cut through the bull and say what's really going on, and to do so week in and week out, they've made The Beat their home. Pure Dragon, 007, The Poetic Prisoner, Gellé, Jason Tréas — they've taken all that they learned, all that they put into their pieces, and made it work for them on the outs. Others — E-Money, Dat Nguyen, Israel Perez (aka Wardog), . . . — haven't had the chance to put their knowledge to work on the outs yet, but we anticipate them making the world a better place for themselves as well as others when they do walk out those gates. It's on you to do the same, Jay. Your presence in The Beat has been awesome — we're not sure we can think of someone who so consistently featured on the POW pages. But the next step is where all of this knowledge — of yourself, of the world — comes due. You're right, the time for talking has ended, and it's now the time for doing. We have no doubt that you can have that wonderful life. How are you going to strive to make it happen, to put up with the bad times and strive for the good, to get up when you slip and fall and get back on the path you see ahead?

## Dear Father

Dad, I know I never really told you how I felt about you... at least till now.

Well you know that I think we have a good relationship and all. It's just really hard sometimes because you're at work during the day, and mostly that's when my problems begin. I mean someone has to provide for me and mom, right?

I don't think our father-son relationship can get lower. I mean we have had hard times, and we have had our best times. I just want things to go the way they used to be. When I'm around you I feel normal. You have always helped me with my problems the best way you could. You give me advice and I know sometimes it might not seem like I'm paying attention, but I can tell you every word of advice you have ever told me.

I miss you dad. I miss just sitting on the couch watching basketball and football games. I miss going to the movies and going out to eat. I miss mom's voice telling us that we're inconsiderate because when we went to eat we didn't bring her any food back. I miss you picking me up and us going out to have a day of our own. I miss us going to the back and playing basketball at grandma's. I really respect you and I think you're an excellent dad.

From here I just think our relationship can get better. I'm going to try and involve you more in my life than I used to. There are some things that I'd rather talk to you about than with mom, even though she finds out anyways. I just want to tell you thank you for everything you have done for me. You are always by me in the worst times I've had. And you always had something positive to tell me.

I love you dad. I can't wait to come home to prove to you and show you that I really have changed. Your son,

### -Kurupt, San Mateo

*From The Beat:* This pair of love letters to your mom and dad truly touched us. We feel you in a very powerful way. Few sons ever tell their dads the things you have said here, and we know your dad will appreciate reading your words. To us, it shows the development of an immature youngster into a maturing young man. Of course, Kurupt, it is easier to feel the pain of separation and missing love when you are here. When you are home again, you will be faced with all the same stresses and strife that you left behind. That's when your maturity will really pay off, as you find ways to deal with frustration and anger in a more positive, grown up way. We know you can do it. And, while it's important to prove this to your mom and dad, it is even more important to prove it to yourself. Thank you for these two wonderful letters.



### My Life

Looking at my life  
I can't complain  
I had it all  
But then came the pain  
Into my heart it shot  
Its job being to sit there  
And make me rot  
Over ten years ago  
My father left  
I don't know how many nights  
I sat and wept  
Just like that  
he was gone  
What possibly  
Could have gone wrong?  
He had three boys  
I would have rather had him  
Than all of my toys  
I owed him so much  
When he left I felt nothing  
Nothing but crushed  
How could a man  
Do such a thing?  
Didn't he give a damn?  
He did, and trust me  
He really misses his family  
Crank can make people  
Do stupid things  
Like leaving a family behind  
To me that should be a crime  
But on the other hand  
My mom is a gold medallist  
For doing what she had to do  
She took care of  
What he left behind  
How can one be so kind?  
She never gave up  
Even after  
She was hit by a truck  
Today I know my dad  
At him I can't be mad  
The drugs took over  
But then he found

A lucky  
Four-leafed clover  
I wish he could be here  
But I know he can't  
Now looking back  
I can see my life wasn't so bad  
I had too much support  
For that I'm glad  
The biggest support  
Was my Grandpa  
He was always there for me  
He also helped my family  
He wanted us to succeed  
He would always come  
To me and my brothers'  
Baseball games  
Last year he passed away  
He may be in heaven  
But in our memories  
He lives  
And in our hearts  
Is where he is

-Tim, Marin

From The Beat: Beautiful poem, Tim. Where is your dad now, that he can't have any access to you and your brothers? Can you visit him? How is your mother managing to raise y'all on her own? How do you help her? Why do you write that you had too much support? If you believe that your pain's job is to make you rot, can you somehow lessen the pain? Or can you build up and enrich your life with activities and accomplishments that can help you feel happy and proud? Sometimes nature can take over help heal your pain. It can provide you with a life that is true to what you find valuable, so you have other emotions, like excitement, joy, love, maybe toward your mom, brothers, a pet, a girlfriend, friends, sports teammates, school friends, etc. Great luck to you!



### No Way Out

How can I stay sober  
With so much pressure  
From my mom?  
She expects me to be strong  
When she's puffin' on a crystal meth bong  
Will she ever realize she's my example  
Or will she always turn her head the other way?  
She leaves every night around dinner  
Doesn't come back 'til the next day  
Although I would love to enjoy her company  
And I beg for her to stay  
It's hard to know the ugly truth  
It kills me inside each and every day  
The meth has taken over her body and her soul  
Her pride, her love for her two girls  
Her looks, her job, her home  
This drug has gratefully stolen  
Even though I see it every day  
I crave it  
I need it  
I love it  
But I've learned before it's too late  
It takes over  
And there's no way out

-Kd, Marin

From The Beat: Sad poem. How did you overcome your addiction? Did seeing meth trying to destroy your mom's life help you decide to leave drugs alone? Are you sure you've kicked the meth, or do you feel shaky being on your own, having to resist the drug? How are you doing in Juvy without drugs? Can you get into a drug program, if you feel you need it? Can you ask the med tech, the psychologist or a counselor in Juvy for help into a program? Do you still live with your mom on the outs? Good luck and strength to you!

**Will she ever realize  
she's my example  
Or will she always turn  
her head the other way?  
She leaves every night  
around dinner  
Doesn't come back 'til  
the next day**



## A Letter To Myself

A letter to myself would be something like this:

Look homie, how you been? Please don't tell me that you have been coo' 'cause if you do I'll smack you when I see you.

But anyways, let's get to the point. Why I wrote you this letter is because at the place you're at. Look, be happy you got caught up when you were seventeen. The reason why I say this is because if you would have got caught when you were eighteen, you would be facing 15 to 20.

Look, I know your gang related, but you could still fix your life. Many people been in your shoes. Don't think that you're the only one. You could make it out. Leave the city. Nobody is going to know where you at, so they not going to know where to look. After about a year or two, everybody will forget you. Maybe a little more time, but it's either that or end up in worse places.

Look, homie, you still young, got your whole life ahead. Think 'bout you and your family. Don't be selfish. Think about it for me. Think about the long run, not just the present.

**-Cruz B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** What a wonderful letter, Cruz. We wish everybody in the Hall would not only read this, but take your advice to heart. You show such maturity in this letter to yourself, that we have to believe you're on another path now, one that is not without its struggles (after all, to be alive is to struggle), but pays major dividends in self-respect, honor, decency, and a life lived in freedom without looking over your shoulder.

## what's the worst the court do to a ninja that's locked in a cell besides kill him?

## This Is The Way It Is?

This is the mentality me and my potnas have, it's like we're born to die, in the meantime get money, I'll pass on that book. It's like the reason certain stuff happened to me is because I never listened — others did.

Some negativity brings positivity, like stuff that is put there to break you builds you up, makes you stronger. Most say the streets are here to teach you a lesson or break you down, either one. And most say it's a learning experience and inner strength.

It's like drugs — some put it out there to break us down, like slavery. It was here to break people, yeah it's a tragedy, it's horrible, it's negative, but in some ways it was some aspects of that negativity that brought forth some positivity.

Was it my fault? My daddy didn't plan this. When I look at myself in the mirror, I say to myself I don't wanna be the next number. Then it's even more harder when you wanna be positive but you got ninjas shootin' at your head.

Somebody told me, man, you shootin' like 25 to Life never crossed yo' mind? The world is a war zone and I gotta keep from going under. I'm troublesome. They planning on destroying us. They saying, give these street ninjas guns and watch them kill each other, the way I feel sometimes it's like they should have killed me when I was born.

Now I'm trapped in the storm. Now it's like, what's the worst the court do to a ninja that's locked in a cell besides kill him?

**-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** This is probably the realest piece you ever wrote. Don't be afraid to get your feelings out on paper. Do you think that you'll be able to escape the street life easily or will it be hard? How can you make a better life for yourself? They say, "beware of your thoughts, for they become your actions, beware of your actions for they become your behavior." Do you think that you can change your train of thought so that you can build a future for yourself away from incarceration?

## The Toughest Choice

She screamed as the ashtray, flung across the room, hit her in the middle of the back. She stopped in her tracks, turned around and faced the man who would soon bear the title of "father" to the unborn child she carried.

Rage welled up from deep inside her as she tried to contain the flood of tears surfacing just below her eyelids. This was not the life she had envisioned for herself or her unborn child. This man, no matter how hard he tried, was still a brutal, selfish person through and through. It was at that moment that the young woman knew, with her entire being, that this man could have no contact with the life she was carrying, even if he was the biological father. He proved that he was incapable of managing his frustration.

With that said, the young lady walked from the house to her car. A lot of issues needed to be addressed. The child deserved much more than this young woman or her boyfriend could provide. With a heavy heart and a decision that impacted numerous people, arrangements were made to place the child for adoption.

Fast-forward seven months into the future and see a young married couple smiling down on a daughter they had only dreamed of having. Here was the answer to their prayers. With smiles, tears of joy and whispers of "I love you," the young couple and their new baby left the hospital.

The young girl, who had been abused and hit by an ashtray thrown by the father of her unborn child cried because she knew that even though she had been selfless in giving her child to a loving family, it still hurt. However, that child would never know the terror of the man's rage, because she had been given to a family who were devoted to loving her and giving her the best possible life that anyone could imagine.

**-Unknown, San Luis Obispo**

**From The Beat:** Wow! You are an excellent writer, and you really illustrate some of the pros and cons of adoption. Some people think giving a child up for adoption is selfish, but we don't think that's true at all. Your story shows just how generous it can be to a child. Have you been on one of the sides of adoption? We're kind of curious if the adopted child in your story will try to find the biological mother later? Will they be able to have a good relationship?

## Living Of The Line

I began believing life was all about fun and drugs, and they were the only way too feel enlightened and have a better understanding of life. Smoking, rolling, and sniffing was where my money went, and now I understand why older fools can't pay their rent.

It took a few years to understand myself, but I couldn't have been there if it weren't for my parents. They say they didn't understand drugs' effects on life, but watching me messed up every day was not an appealing sight. They got on my nerves because they understood me well, but my friends and getting high were a lot more important until now.

I thought I could do it all, but you will fall if you haven't already. I have gone to places I would have never gone in the right state of mind. But now I can understand and help others who are going through tough times.

My parents tried everything to set me straight, but that does not mean anything if you don't put anything into helping yourself. When you feel you're forced to do something that you don't want to do, then try to understand it might benefit you. Denial was my problem and that got me nowhere except where I'm now, which allowed me to think about a changed life.

Other homies in here haven't been as lucky as me getting comforted by their parents like they're on TV. All I can say is if you change your perspective and start anew, your old bad habits will be crushed and be through. It's up to you to change or you will end up back in jail feeling ill you hadn't changed your ways when you had the chance.

Life for me has been an up and downhill roller coaster, but you better hold on or you will fall over. My parents have spent tons of money, snatched on me, and spent time off work to try to help me. This entire year I have been in an endless cycle of hate. But now I understand that nothing is too late. Better late than never, and that goes for everyone!

**-The Hulk, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: What we particularly like about this piece, Hulk — besides the wonderful fact that you're obviously on the right track after a long stretch on the wrong one — is that you acknowledge all the resistance you put up, all the hate your parents' many efforts generated in you, and all (or at least a hint of) the debased and debauched things you did either while high or in order to get high. Best of all, you remind all of us that "nothing is too late," and for that we both applaud you and thank you.*

**I just hate it that  
it took me being  
locked up to  
realize that you're  
the only one who  
has really been by  
my side  
and will always  
have my back and  
support me.**



## Dear Mother

I'm writing this as a letter to my mom. I can't tell her to her face because there's just a feeling I have. So I'd rather have her read it and see her reactions when she's done reading. So, Dear Mom,

How can I tell you what I really feel? My emotions for you are so deep. It just took the wrong reasons for me to realize that. Now I can't see you every day, talk to you every day. It's like really, I want to come home and be part of the family again. Now I know that you do love me and care about me.

At times I know I was hard-headed and stubborn and wanted everything to go my way, just like you. I think the real reason we couldn't have one conversation without one of us getting mad is because we're too alike. After all, I am part of you.

Mom I just really love you and I want you to know that there isn't a day that I don't think about being home by my mom's side. We have a connection where I can feel like I can tell you anything. It's like you know what I'm thinking. And you can always tell if I'm lying, or if I'm mad, sad, happy, in a good mood or in a bad mood.

I just hate it that it took me being locked up to realize that you're the only one who has really been by my side and will always have my back and support me. I miss you so much. I just want to come home so I can prove to you that I have changed in a good way and I can fully have your trust in me again. Sixty-nine days mom, and I'm home. I can't wait to see your face when I take you out to eat and spend a whole day with just you and me. I'm gonna treat you just like a mom should be treated.

What more can I say than I love you.

**-Kurupt, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: What a beautiful tribute to your mother, Kurupt. We don't believe she can read this without crying. We couldn't either. Why do you think it took losing your freedom, why did it take being snatched from your family, before you realized all that you have written here? We know how families are, so we know it will not always be sunshine and brightness between you and your mom even after you get home. We hope that you will remember just how powerfully you miss your mom and just how much you love her the next time the two of you start getting angry with each other so that it doesn't escalate into something you'll later regret.*



## A Helping Hand

dedicated to Broken Glass  
 wait hold on  
 all hope ain't gone  
 trust me lil' mama be strong  
 we in this together  
 whether you feel no one cares  
 i'll be there  
 like an answer to your prayers  
 like you i too am dying  
 soon to be flying  
 haters let 'em hate  
 have faith your day soon is to come  
 so why give up and try to run  
 lil' mama you got skill  
 to maintain trust me it's all a mind game  
 as the bible says judge not or thou shalt be judged  
 dust them off with a mean mug and a shoulder  
 shrug  
 i'll be your angel through lyrics  
 the heavens are calling  
 quiet can you hear it  
 don't let no one bring you down  
 regain your throne put on your crown  
 once was a princess but now a queen  
 so if pushed don't scream  
 for i'll be there to catch you on swift wings  
 for incarceration ain't nothing but time  
 for remember your body is locked in your room  
 but not your mind  
 so as i wipe your tears that you cry  
 sharing worlds through our minds  
 i'll be your hope when your backed against the ropes  
 and always look to the stars  
 'cause beyond these clouds of gray  
 awaits happier and brighter days  
 so when you think nobody listens  
 think twice for you are living my life  
 in the form of a woman  
 stuff is hard but not impossible  
 so stand up tall one-hundred-per-cent awareness  
 fearless with your back against the wall  
 push pull strive got to stay alive  
 half-past dead  
 so stop living to die  
 open your eyes lil' mama and visualize your prize  
 — life

**-Ben, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: We already dubbed you poet laureate of your unit, and what do you do? Press your case to be recognized as poet laureate of the 150 Crew! Accolades aside, in this poem you really hit your stride inspired by the passionate lyrics and prose of Broken Glass, in which you feel her pain explode and pass into another heart of gold that starts to flow with all the wisdom and compassion a poet can fashion with words of bold visionary luster, until you muster heaven's resplendent choirs of angels descendent to persuade Broken Glass to see mentally as a fact better days not only in her future but today if she will but break away from the despair and spiritual stupor that seizes her bruised and battered soul yet destined to become whole with a moment's revelation of imminent participation in the achieving of all her life's goals at last: one-hundred-per-cent awareness of transcending her past suffering and present tests with an army of angels and poets offering aid in her heroic quest to be spiritually and physically free! The best that's yet to be is here now present mentally to those who but choose to see, then share it lyrically.*

## Leon's Story

### Chapter 1

Leon grew up in a little town in LA. His dad grew up in New York City. Before Leon was born, his grandmother had died. Leon's dad didn't know what to do. One day his dad was going to the store and saw this good-looking woman. So he decided that he needs a woman in his life. So they started to talk. She didn't have a job at the time. They didn't have no money. She told Leon's dad to look for one.

He finds a job in the warehouse and he asks her to marry him. They get married and get a house together in LA. Soon Leon is born. Leon looks like his dad.

### Chapter 2

The first few years were happy times for the family. Dad went to work but mom started to get bored at home with Leon. Leon's dad worked hard. He worked long hours. Mom felt alone all day and she started doing drugs.

One night dad tried some and he really liked it — too much. Dad started showing up for work high and he got fired. Then they moved to a little apartment and went on welfare and they watched TV all day.

### Chapter 3 (Caught)

Finally, Leon, Jesse and Marcos made a mistake. They tried to rob an old lady's house while she was at church. They were tearing up the house when they heard the old lady come back. Early, Marcos and Jesse scared her and quickly run out. Little Leon tried to run out but she grabs him and says, "I'm holding on to you until the police take you away."

"But m'am, those big kids forced me to do it. They were going to beat me up," Leon pleaded.

"You gonna wish they were beating you up by the time I'm done with you," the old woman snarled. All of a sudden the police came in.

"You are the luckiest little boy in the world," the old woman said.

"We are taking him to the station, m'am," the officer said. "He is a suspect in a lot of burglaries."

The court decided that Leon could not live with his parents anymore. Leon is told that he will live in a grouphome. Leon is scared to death. Leon is only nine years old. Most of the other boys in the home are twelve to fourteen. Leon told the probation officer that he wants to live with his mom and dad.

"You should have thought about that before you did the crimes, son."

### Chapter 4 (Going Through Stress)

Leon arrives at the grouphome at dinnertime.

Jim asks, "How did you get here? Leon?"

"My probation officer brought me here."

Jim says, "That's how I got here six months ago."

To be continued...

**-Leon, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: This is a very well written story and we are in suspense to hear what comes next. Did your parents tell you how it was when they met? Have either of them been able to stay off drugs? It's difficult seeing your loved ones hurt themselves but all you can do is help yourself first then eventually help them get the care they need if they will accept it. If not, you can learn from them about what you want for your future and future family. Can you look at your past as reasons but not excuses to your current situation? While looking back, remember that you have so much power to make your life what you want and to stay free and legit. It seems you didn't get much support as a child. Now that you are older and able, help yourself and it's very important to find as much support as possible too in the beginning. You will one day look back from a better situation and be able to feel good that you have persevered and made a place for yourself in the world.*

### **It Runs in My Family**

The cycles that run in my family are: incarceration, drug use, alcohol and violence.

In my family there never was a father figure; he was always gone out the house, never being a father to his kids when he was too much worried about other stuff. And while he was worried about other stuff, all his sons were running the streets committing crimes — not trippin' off of school or gettin' locked up.

Now we're addicted to the streets and gangs. And now my brother is about to get 35 to Life, 'cause of the family cycle that never stopped. Now all I can say is: My brother Brandon, keep yo' head up!

**-Droopy, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Maybe we should run this piece again on Father's Day. How many fathers pass along incarceration, drug use, alcohol abuse and violence to their sons (and daughters)? Too many! At least you recognize your addiction while it's still early enough to fight before you end up facing a similar sentence.*

*Fight not just for you but for the next generation, too. Break the cycle!*

### **Don't Ask Why**

Don't ask why I do the things I do or act the way I do because you should already know.

The system has been doing the Black man bad for many years. Just to get a job, we have to work harder than the white man. I mean, damn, our families got to eat too. But they don't care. To them we are animals that should be locked away in jail for all our lives. Because of this, we have to do what we have to do to survive, sell drugs and even rob people so our families can eat every night.

If the system really wants all this to stop, then they should make a change. But seeing that that's not going to happen, then police will continue to be shot and drugs will continue to be sold on the streets of poverty. People will continue to be robbed by the poor.

Damn! What do you expect to happen? Do you think we are going to sit and let our families starve? Some do, but not me. and if because of this I end up in the pen for the rest of my life, let that be. But I will not sit and let my people rot away.

Shhhh, white men! If you were in my shoes, what would you do? I just can't see how someone can hate a person because of their skin color, just because my skin is darker than yours. That's something that no one can explain to me, but it continues to happen to the Black man.

**-Young Vell, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: One of the things we find so tragic about this piece is that it shows how young men like you — strong intelligent Black males — get sidelined in this society, never having an opportunity to reach their potential. We absolutely agree with your analysis of how the Black man is (and not just the Black man, either, but Native Americans and other racial/ethnic minorities). But there is a fatal flaw in your reasoning: You say you won't sit by and let your family go hungry, and yet you risk that very result by going to prison for a very long time (or forever). In other words, you're in a Catch-22 situation (a paradox). If you have to resort to crime to make sure your family is fed, then you give the system power to remove you from society altogether, during which time you can provide absolutely nothing for your family. How do you get around this paradox?*

**Do you think we are going to sit and let our families starve? Some do, but not me. and if because of this I end up in the pen for the rest of my life, let that be.**

### **My 'Hood Is My World**

shhh is goin' down in my 'hood  
it's gettin' crazy out there  
we goin' through the hardest funk in'  
that there's been in a minute  
it's funk season  
all i need to do is just be coo'  
watch my back and protect the 'hood  
the only world i know is my 'hood  
i live in this world  
i ride in this world  
i funk in this world  
i drunk an' smoke' in this world  
i learned the game in this world  
i've been rehabilitated in this world  
you know why —  
'cause my 'hood is my world

**-Kasper, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Rehabilitation takes place between your ears or nowhere. You need to change your game or your path will remain the same — leading you to jails, hospitals or death.*

**I wanna get the hell out  
already. Damn!  
Gotta make things  
good again, get myself  
out of this jam**

### **Just Another Day**

There's nothing like a bad day in jail  
Don't wanna do nothing just sit in my cell  
And all the little things be makin' me mad  
I'm feelin' like shhhh and it's all bad  
Doin' straight time gotta get through each day  
Try to take it minute by minute but my mind's in my way  
I block out the bullshhhh, but it last only a few  
Then I'm back to trippin', don't know what to do  
Tried meds and yoga, shhhh don't work for me  
Just sittin' back takin' it like a G  
Seem like everyone else be happy and smilin'  
They see me just postin' but inside I'm wildin'  
I wanna get the hell out already. Damn!  
Gotta make things good again, get myself out of this jam  
Take another deep breath, put my head up high  
Make the best of this shhhh, or at least try  
I've been torn up and scared, maybe that's why I ain't nice  
It's just another day in my so-called life.

**-Rocheleau, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: We wish we had some kind of magic bullet to make things better, but there is no such thing. "Better" only comes with time and with work. We feel the sadness in your efforts to maneuver through the minefields of your life. But we also feel a power at work inside you that is seeking a different life, and a better future. Being "torn up and scared" is a terrible way to feel which makes it hard for you to see the hope we see in you. What is the source of that feeling? By admitting you're scared, you show a willingness to confront your demons. All we can tell you, Rocheleau, is that wanting to change is the most important ingredient for change, so hang in there. You will not always feel as you do today, and you just have to have faith that things will get better as you work toward that goal.*



## The Kiss

All I see when I look within  
Is old decrepit wrinkled and withering skin  
Broken heart, cold and alone  
In an unfixable family living in a broken home  
A sudden dis followed by statistical bliss  
Manipulated easily by Ana's seductive kiss  
It's the same for me when I feel her touch  
But I'm not whipped, if not more she loves me just as much  
I'm everyone's counselor, yet I can't counsel myself  
I've never had cash so I don't concentrate on wealth

**-Match Maker B4, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We're not sure what all this means, but we really like it anyway. What do you mean you're everyone's counselor but can't counsel yourself? We feel pretty certain that you can counsel yourself. The question is, will you follow your own counsel?

## Thank You For Delivering Me

i can stand once again on my own  
and i know that i'm strong  
enough to mend  
and every time i feel afraid  
i hold tighter to my faith  
and i live one more day  
and make it through my pain  
i still got a lot to learn  
but at least i know where i can turn  
when i'm in my times of need  
as i know all things are possible  
just as long as i believe  
i've loved a lot  
hurt a lot  
been burned in life and times  
i spent so many precious years  
wrapped up in fear  
sheddin' a lot of tears  
with no end in sight  
until my lord set me free  
givin' me peace and strength  
when i almost lost it all  
he was there catching my every fall  
i know i still exist  
'cause you keep me safe  
i thank you lord for believing in me  
and finding me in this place  
look i've been bruised  
grew up confused  
i thought of being destitute  
i've seen life from many sides  
at a young age  
been black and white  
i felt inferior inside  
but not knowing if this feeling is right  
and along with all the bountiful things you do  
thank you lord for delivering me

**-Tyresha, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Not many people seem to see the particular difficulty of growing up black and white. All the confusion and bruising you'd feel, was real — but inferiority, no way! So while you're thanking God for delivering you, remember the Lord is considering you one of his children. None of your suffering has been hidden from Heaven, so open your heart and receive the Lord's blessing — keep strong and keep mending! You are more not less for your suffering and distress, loved above the rest.

## A Letter To Yogi

If you put yourself in a certain situation, you have to face the consequence. There is nothing wrong with discipline, and nothing wrong with learning from your mistakes.

Ain't nothing wrong with backing down sometimes.

Ain't nothing wrong with sitting and listening to your parents.

Ain't nothing wrong doing the right thing.

**-Yogi Yog B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Even though this is a short piece, it's packed with vital advice. We particularly like your first advice because we think if more of us were willing to back down sometimes, there'd be a lot less funk. When was the last time you backed down from a situation? What was the result?

**I want to thank my  
brother for being  
my best friend and  
always listening to  
what I have to say.  
Without my brother,  
I don't know where I  
would be in life.**

## Thanks to My Brother

My older brother is very important to me. He understands where I'm coming from. None of my family understands what I'm going through but my brother, because he's been through the system as well.

He explains things to me that help me get through my time in the Hall. His words go through my head daily! And they keep me in focus. My brother has always been there for me, even when he was in jail.

I want to thank my brother for being my best friend and always listening to what I have to say. Without my brother, I don't know where I would be in life. My brother helps me to understand why I do the things I do.

Come to think about it, my brother is like my conscience that never led me in the wrong direction. I love my brother with all my heart, and I just want to say, "Thank you!" Love always, your lil' sister —

**-Lil' Gabby, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Exactly what your brother does for you, is what we hope The Beat might do for more than a few of its readers — guide them through with words of experience, as a conscience speaks truth to those who hear it. Props to your brother and congrats to you! (Can he teach you how to stay free, too?)

## Boxing

I'm from East Los Angeles. I moved to San Mateo about three years ago. I've been boxing since I was little. I started boxing at the age of seven, and since then, I've been boxing.

I got into boxing because I get out all my stress and anger in a positive way. In East Los Angeles, I boxed at Don Ramon's Boxing Gym. Out here, I'm boxing at Arguello's Gym in Redwood City.

I've achieved a lot while boxing. I've won the '98 tournament. In '99, I won my Silver Gloves, and I'm working on winning the Golden Gloves.

Well, I take boxing as a hobby and as a discipline sport. I'm always trying to learn something of boxing, and I love getting in the ring. On the bad side, when you box for six months or so, you have to register yourself as a boxer, and if you get into a street fight you can get charged with assault with deadly weapons, which are your hands.

Every time I'm in the ring, it's an adrenaline rush. While I'm in the ring during a fight, I don't feel anything until the next day.

I want to give a shout out to my trainers, Don Ramon and Salas from East Los Angeles, to Jose, my trainer from Redwood City, to my cousins Kasper and Goofy, and to my cousin Carlos Patiño, aka Choco. Rest In Peace, Carnal.

**-Juan, San Mateo**

**From The Beat:** What elevates this to piece of the week quality is that it teaches us about things most of us don't know. It also takes us out of the Hall and out of the world of turf and crews. Do you think your efforts in the boxing ring have helped you in other areas of your life? Does boxing keep you out of trouble? Do you see yourself boxing professionally one day, or will this always be "a hobby" and "a discipline" for you?

## Breaking

A little black box  
And I'm bleeding to death  
My eyes burn crimson  
Then fade into a grayish hate  
Primordial rage seizes the moment  
Possessed by the hatchet  
And the killings on it  
A stage of escape  
Kept alive by the desire  
To populate the other side of the gate  
Mind filled photographs flash  
Little golden curls  
I'm brought to the floor  
The waves fade away  
Now every one's asleep  
Their juices seep from the wounds  
I finally found a friend  
As a child of the moon  
But it can't take away  
The shards of reality

**-Brixx, Virginia**

**From The Beat:** The violence that happens in our lives and world can shape our deepest thoughts. We feel you have a great ability to share these thoughts and thread them together in the beautiful fabric of your poem. Can you share the frank reality behind your abstract lines? How do you relate to the symbols in this poem — the black box, wounds, the moon...?

## Pain I feel is expressed wit' this lead on the paper

## It's Serious

Why are you laughing?  
Do you find it funny  
That you just gave up hope  
Then pushed me in a ditch  
Along side the bodies of before?  
Gave faith to the organ of life  
And now you've slit my throat  
With it's shattered shards?  
You didn't even notice the Atlantic in my eyes  
When you kissed him over there  
Seasons passed again and again  
And the words were never spoken  
Now I lie in a puddle of my own blood  
Bound and broken  
Cowardice, I'm so ashamed  
Yet I can't bury you  
So I  
Hold myself and walk away  
Pity, pity...

**-Brixx, Virginia**

**From The Beat:** Superb poem. Who is this you are talking to? These images of your demise may be how you feel from time to time. When do you feel like this the most? Keep consoling yourself and don't hesitate to talk to someone too or write. It's okay to feel sorry for yourself but recognize the reality that your life has two sides, one side is blessed and the other may be cursed. You've been through a lot but you are alive, gifted and not alone.

## Life I Live

Life I live was only chosen fo' a few  
At times this grind make me wanna quit like "I'm thru!"  
Envy plagues me like an STD, that's why Swisher Sweets  
Stay wrapped about the trees, hard to believe  
How this game done ended up sometimes  
It's pumpkin headed you can forget it sayin' it's a black eye  
So many of my folks gone, it done drove me nuts  
Talkin' to myself, got 'em lookin' at me like, "what?"  
Pain I feel is expressed wit' this lead on the paper  
You already know what the other kind do to the haters  
My DNA strand is a different brand of players  
Like that M in pro baseball stand fo' "major"  
Conscience tellin' me you like a bald head, can't nobody fade ya'  
Or as the star on a hoop team, the "key play maker"  
Don't get it wrong, everybody get called fo' fouls  
That's why I'm still locked down and ain't got out  
It's my fault but damn I hate this  
Why don't they just hurry up and release me to the matrix?  
Where I move with finesse off white T's, no Mitchell and Ness  
But fo' some reason, I'm still low and depressed  
With burner gloves to beat out a forensics test  
No guess, despite the life I live, still seem to be blessed

**-Dolla Deesa, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You performed this like a professional during the program. You have confidence and wisdom to know what can bring you down. You also have habits that are hard to break. How will you break them? Great to hear you know you are blessed. Use your gifts to rise above the rest. You can be the one to inspire others to follow.



## Why?

Why did I put myself in this position?  
 Why couldn't I just sit down and listen?  
 Why am I on the verge of going to prison?  
 Why is a large part of my life missin'?  
 Why do I keep throwing my life away?  
 Why can't I just go to a program and stay?  
 Why can't I get my life straight?  
 Why can't I grow up and be somebody great?  
 Why do I always wait for the last minute?  
 Why when I have a goal I don't put effort in it?  
 Why is it I lead with my instincts not my mind?  
 Why is it peace in life I can't find?  
 Why is it I can't change the way I am?  
 Why is it I can't be the best I can?  
 Why is it I keep coming back?  
 Why is it that common sense I lack?  
 Why did it just hit me after all this time?  
 Why did it happen when I almost crossed the line?  
 Why do I keep coming back to the Hall?  
 Why do I keep ending up with y'all?  
 Why is it that I'm always alone?  
 Why is it that I can't go back home?  
 I just don't know...

-Toni, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** These are some very good soul searching questions that you've asked yourself. It's good that you're questioning the decisions you've made, while you still have time to correct them. Be sure to stay focused and don't let your mistakes as a youngsta discourage you because it's never too late to change. Plus, we have faith that you can answer everyone of those questions you pose.

## Family Traditions And Cycles

My family has a good cycle. All my sisters graduated from high school, and are now in college. My mom is a single mother and I think she tried her hardest to educate us and teach

us our morals. Our family has a lot of family reunions. That's one of the things I love about our family. Our family does have a healthy eating habit most of the time.

One cycle I've seen playing out over the years is at least once a year we have a huge wedding or we go on a trip together. The pattern is always good because it makes me feel secure. Sometimes the cycle gets broken by a family member's death or an accident where we're mad with our relatives.

One family cycle I would like to change is when we get into fights with our relatives and we're forbidden to talk to them. Also one family cycle I would like to see strengthened is our family reunions.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** What a great family you have! We hope others will read this and get ideas for their families. We like that you wrote about some things you would like to see change since no family is ideal. The silent treatment can be detrimental to a family's happiness and peace. How could you make your suggestions and help carry them out with your family?

## I would encourage myself by living right

## A Letter To Me

I would encourage myself  
 By doing the right thing  
 By stop selling these rocks to all the dope fiends.  
 I would encourage myself by living right  
 By stop taking flight on ninjas on a hype  
 By stopping and thinking it ain't all about fun.  
 'Cause I'm tired of holding guns  
 And living my life on the run  
 I would encourage myself by stop selling dope  
 'Cause on these streets ninjas ain't got no damn dough  
 'Cause all these ninjas be trying to steal a ninjas hope  
 So if I encourage myself I could do da right thing  
 By stop selling bleam and kill' ninjas dreams  
 I want to encourage myself so I could be on top  
 And not have to worry about myself carrying a glock  
 Or getting shot by a ninja on the spot  
 'Cause by encouraging myself could live a long life  
 And maybe seeing some kids and even a wife  
 'Cause by encouraging myself I'ma be da damn man  
 And hopefully have a plan to making a lot of grand  
 RIP Jerry, Dre, Zillion, Thomas and to all the lost ones

-Big Nate, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Beautiful letter. Read this one over and over until you almost memorize it. You got to make a decision. You are running out of chances. You are capable but we aren't going to lie and tell you it isn't tough to make it legit. We encourage you to find a program like Job Corp, staying sober programs if that's a problem, and/or further your education and have a single-pointed mind — to make it in this crazy world free and legit and not be another lost person. Let The Beat know if you need encouragement or leads.

## Letter To Roderick

I love myself, and I hate the fact that I just keep being a repeat mess- up in the system. So here are some things I would like to change especially when it comes to getting in trouble.

I want you to change the way you think when you know something bad is about to happen. You always think before you act. You know it's wrong, and you still do it. Why do you keep doing the same thing and get locked up for it every time?

My advice to you is to get your life together and stay out of trouble. As smart as you are, you just need to relax and try something different other than getting in trouble. Learn how to pray every night and mean it. Learn how to accept Jesus' word, and instead of getting high off of weed, try reading John 3: 16 and get high off of that instead of getting drunk off of Toka Vodka. Try drinking some grape juice until you are tired and just want to go to sleep.

Be good, my friend, and stay out of trouble.

-Roderick, San Mateo

**From The Beat:** Indeed you are a smart young man, Roderick, and the advice you give yourself in this piece proves that once again. We know that it won't be easy for you to follow all your own advice, but we also know that there is no easy choice for you. We feel very confident that you know what you need to do, and — although you my backslide from time to time — you are about doing it. And, for the sake of those of us not as familiar with the Bible as you, John 3:16 says: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

## Escape

There's no escaping my fears,  
there's no escaping these tears,  
I'm still a prisoner of fate,  
even after all of these years,  
tried to stay strong,  
always told I was wrong,  
troubled by my set of mind,  
Destined for this end all along,  
Trying to escape all my pain,  
trying to get out the game,  
covered up life with crystal,  
only thing permanent is my name,  
Dreams never come true,  
family never comes through,  
born to live here by myself,  
escaping from what I knew.

**Chad, San Luis Obispo**

*From The Beat: Sad piece. Does it make you think about what you'd do differently if you have kids? You say you're escaping from your past, but you can still use your past to move on and be successful? What knowledge and what strengths have you gained through your pain and struggle?*

**I enjoy this program  
because you guys read  
what we think, and we  
read the thoughts  
of you guys**

## A Different Day

It seems to me the pain won't go away  
Someone listen to me  
Until a different day  
Face shows the sign of hurt  
Signs that caution me  
Sixteen won't go away  
Until a different day  
Now I'm waking up to the hurtful noise  
mom and dad losing the single joys  
they once shared a simple melody  
twenty years ago they held a soothing beat  
but now they're gone  
in these different ways  
never come together until a different day  
Confused and lost they left me here  
I feel so used unfaithfully  
Why can't I find the cure?  
Together again I wish they were  
they'll never be on this haunted earth  
God talks to me in confusing ways  
I'll never be myself until a different day

**-Jacob, San Luis Obispo**

*From The Beat: Sad but beautiful writing. We hope that day comes soon. Are there things you can do to reach that day faster — like coming to peace with yourself? Or is more a matter of waiting until time heals the wounds?*

## White Boy Culture Shock

My culture is a culture where unfortunately there's a lot more racist people, so I guess it has stopped me from seizing an opportunity. I think this because other people tell me I am, and I have to stop what I'm doing and tell them I'm not.

My family isn't from another country, but they don't like people from other countries. I do what I like, not what others want me to do. To be honest, for about eight years, I liked Back Street Boys, Britney Spears and other things people didn't. But now I like rap, hip-hop, soul, R&B, and all the good stuff.

I know too many people that get, got, and are still getting held back, not just in school but everything else. Personally, I think everybody that's not white should hate on white people. Like chaplain said, "There is too many racist white people." I think if everybody was anything but white, we would all be better off.

**-Not racist, San Luis Obispo**

*From The Beat: That's cool you're becoming aware of racism in your life, and you're checking out different music. But why would you want to continue the cycle of hating on people based on skin color? How 'bout putting an end to all the hating, instead of putting an end to white people? You well know that all white people aren't racists and haters.*

## The Reason I'm In Here

There are a couple of reasons I'm here: one is my friends, and the other is the choices I made. I have made many choices in my life, but starting to do drugs was the worst by far. When I decided to do them, I had no idea what was going to happen.

When I started, everything was ok. Then I started to do bad in school and started to get into trouble. First I got on diversion and I kept smoking weed. I thought it was no big deal. Then I started failing drug tests and doing worse. Then I got put on probation. I keep failing my drug tests.

Now I'm locked up with no drugs and a lot of time to think. Another reason I'm here is because of my friends. My friends. They were the ones who started me and they're going to be the ones who finish me. My so-called "friends" don't think I'm important if drugs aren't important. Now I'm locked up and my friends rattled me out for something I didn't do!

**-David, San Luis Obispo**

*From The Beat: We're sorry you had such an ugly wake-up about your friends. Why did you become friends with them in the beginning? Why do so many people make friends with people who aren't true? How are you going to chose your friends in the future? What kind of friend are you?*

## Good And Safe

Hey. This is Abel one more time. I enjoy this program because you guys read what we think, and we read the thoughts of you guys. We know that we all are good persons, but sometimes we mess up and we end up in jail.

But jail, what does jail mean to you guys? Many people say that it's just to do time and when you get out you are free and do the same things over and over. But jail, is it good? Yes, because you think about your past and you are safe. Safe? Why safe? Because you are better in there than being dead. Your family could visit you and see you and if you were dead, you couldn't see them or read this.

**-Abel, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: Once again, we're impressed by the attitude you bring to this experience — your words sound as if they're from someone looking back on an experience and picking out the good elements of it, not someone who's in the midst of it. How are you going to let your goodness come through instead of letting the mess ups bring you down? How are you going to be and safe on the outs?*



## **Una Disculpa A Mi Madre Y A Mi Hermana**

Yo le debo una disculpa a mi madre y a mi hermana porque el día miércoles 03/19/04 y el jueves 03/20/04 me la pasé tomando fuera de mi casa y fue ahí cuando tome la decisión de venirme para la USA. Y el día viernes 03/21/04 salí de mi casa con tristeza y totalmente mal por lo que hice los últimos días. No pude compartir con mi madre ni con mi hermana los últimos días y preferí a mis amigos.

Ahora que la migra me tiene encerrado sin poder trabajar es cuando me estoy dando cuenta que mi familia es lo más importate para mí. Saber que no puedo llegar donde está mi padre que está en este país. Llebo unos años que no lo veo y me hace mucha falta.

Lo que quiero es salir de aquí y encontrarme con mi padre, trabajar para poder mandarle un poco de dinero a mi madre y ayudar a mi hermana con sus estudios. Ellos confían en mí y no los debo defraudar. Yo también quiero pedirle disculpa a los que me hayan hecho algo malo y disculpar aquel que me ha hecho daño.

*From The Beat: Es muy penoso lo que hicistes. Ya vez, uno no ve esto hasta que todo ya está perdido y es ahí cuando uno se da cuenta quienes son los que realmente se merece nuestro amor y tiempo. Amigo, no te desanimes, tiempos mejores vendran, ya veras. Con el tiempo haras que ellos se sientan querido por ti, recuerda que primero esta la familia que los amigos. Te deseamos mucha suerte en tu camino y que muy pronto encuentres a tus padre.*

## **I Owe An Apology To My Mother And My Sister**

I owe my mother and my sister an apology because on Wednesday, May 19., 2004, and on Thursday, May 20, 2004, I spent my time drunk outside my house, and that's where I made the decision to come to the USA. And on Friday, May 21, 2004, I left my home with sadness in my heart and feeling really bad for what I had done on the previous days. I could not share my last days with my mother or with my sister because I chose my friends instead.

Now that immigration has me incarcerated and I am not able to work, I've come to realize that my family is what's most important to me, and because now I know that I can't see my father who's in this country. I have not seen him for many years and I miss him.

What I want is to get out of here and reunite myself with my father, work so I can send some money to my mother, and help my sister with her studies. They trust me and I should not do anything to change that. I want to ask for forgiveness from all the people I've harmed, and at the same time, I forgive all the people who have caused me harm.

-René, Marin

**No pude compartir con mi madre ni con mi hermana los últimos días y preferí a mis amigos.**

## **Rodeado De Paredes**

Me lebante esta mañana y saliendo de mi puerta me ví rodeado de estas cuatros paredes que no me dejan salir, escuchar a los pajaros cantar y oír el viento silvar. Al mismo tiempo estando encerrado me ha servido a valorar a mis padres porque en este mundo sólo los tenemos una vez en el mundo. Por eso pienso que les debo una disculpa.

Lo que no ha muerto en mí es la esperanza de algún día salir de aquí y empezarde nuevo. Quiero volver a nacer para empezar desde abajo. Sólo le pido a Dios salir de aquí y empezar desde abajo. Le pido a Dios salir de aquí y encontrarme con mis padre. Me siento arrepentido por todo lo malo que hice, pero todavía puedo cambiar y eso es lo que voy a volver a hacer.

*From The Beat: Que bello es extrañar las cosas bellas que tenemos en la vida. Amigo, sabemos que esto te ha bajado los ánimos, pero también podemos ver que tienes esperanza. No queremos que te des por vencido, si ya estas en este lugar lo mejor es reconocer el error y no volverlo a hacer. Esperamos que concerves esas ganas de seguir adelante y no mirar atras.*

## **Surrounded By Walls**

I woke up this morning and walked out my door, I found myself surrounded by four walls that won't let me out, listening to the birds sing and hear the wind blow. At the same time, being locked up has done me some good. I've learned to appreciate and value my parents because we only have them for as long as they live in this world. That's why I think I owe them an apology.

What has not died out in me is my hope that one day I will get out of this place and start anew. I want to be reborn so I could start from the bottom. I only ask God to help me get out of here and find my father. I feel remorseful for all the bad things that I did, but I can still change, and that's what I am going to do again.

-Manuel, Marin

## **Sueño Perturbante**

Un día muy común como todos los días me acosté a dormir y tube sueño perturbante que todavía no lo puedo borrar. En el sueño vi como mataban a toda mi familia y me perseguían para matarte, corría en la oscuridad sin poder ver nada hasta que caí en un abismo y después me lebanté llorando y muy asustado.

*From The Beat: Que horrible sueño. No te asustes amigo, sólo fue una pesadilla, esperamos que este sueño muy pronto desaparezca de tu vida. Busca la manera como hablar con gente para que te ayuden a olvidar esta pesadilla que te está persiguiendo desde mucho tiempo.*

## **Disturbing Dream**

On a very ordinary day, just like any other day, I laid my head down to sleep and I had a disturbing dream that I still cannot get out of my head.

In my dream, I saw my family getting killed and I was next. I was running in the dark. I could not see anything until I landed in an abyss. After that happened, I woke up crying. I was spooked.

-René, Marin

*Me Siento Acabado*

Unos cuantos mese más en este lugar. No me siento bien, me siento en mi cuarto y nomas tengo pensamientos que no me dejan en paz. Me siento muy devil sin nada de fuerzas. Siento que me muero. Me siento muy solo y triste. No tengo a lo que quiero junto a mi lado lo cual es esta jaina que quiero y extraño muchísimo. Mija, si estuvieras junto a mi lado, te dijera cuanto te amo, todo lo que siento por ti. Recuerda esto, mi corazón bonito, siempre estaras en mi mente y en mi corazón. No importa lo que pase porque siempre te amaré, tu papi chulo.

**From The Beat:** Chale, sentimos mucho que este lugar no te esté dando lo que te mereces, esperamos que muy pronto esto pase y te haga la vida más tranquila. No te deprimas, queremos que sigas adelante, esto no es el fin del mundo. Todos cometemos errores y todos tenemos que pagar por estos errores y así aprender de los errores.

*I Feel Defeated*

I have a few more months to go before I get released from this place. I don't feel good. All I do is sit in my room and think about things that won't let me be in peace. I feel very weak and drained out. I feel like I am dying. I feel very lonely and sad.

I don't have what I want by my side and that's this female whom I love and I miss a whole lot. Girl, if you were by my side, I would tell you how much I love you and how I feel about you. Remember this my sweetheart: You'll always be on my mind and in my heart. I don't care what happens because I will always love you, from your sugar daddy.

-Pelón, 150 Crew

*A Mi Novia Le Debo Una Disculpa*

Hay una persona a quien le quiero pedir mis disculpas y mis perdones. Esa persona es alguien a quién quiero tanto, mi novia.

Quiero que me perdones por todo el daño que te hice pasar cuando estábamos juntos. Te quiero decir que extraño mucho y que me remueve la conciencia cuando pienso en ti. También porque soy el culpable de todo lo que pasó entre nosotros. Perdóname mi mija, espero salir pronto para estar juntos y seguir con los planes que teníamos. Recuerda que te quiero mucho.

**From The Beat:** Esperamos que consiga el perdón de esta persona, porque sabemos como se siente sentirse culpable por muchas cosas. Si tanto quieres a esta muchacha, te aconsejamos que pongas tu cabeza sobre la tierra y empieces a hacerle caso a las personas que tanto quieres. ¿Dinos una cosa, a que estás dispuesto por el perdón de esta chica?

*I Owe An Apology To My Girl*

There's a person whom I would to apologize to and ask for forgiveness. That person is someone whom I love very much, my girlfriend. I want you to forgive me for all the damage that I caused you while we were together.

I want to tell you that I miss you very much and to please relieve the guilt that I feel in my conscience when I think about you. I'm sorry because I feel I'm the responsible for all the things that we have gone through. Forgive me, girl. I hope to get out of here soon so we can be together and complete the plans that we had. Always remember that I love you very much.

-Miguel, Santa Cruz

*Me Tienes Loco*

Cada vez que te veo, más te quiero  
Y cuando te beso, más te deseo

Tu mirada me enamora  
Tus palabras me seducen  
De todos los caramelos  
Eres tú la más dulce  
Mi mente piensa en ti

Día tras día

Tú senciyes, y tu humildad me enamoró

Eres la mujer más bella

Eres la mujer perfecta,

De todo el cielo,

Eres el lucero más bello.

Del jardín serías la rosa más hermosa

Y para mí boca, la fruta más deliciosa,

Eres dueña de mi vida y de mi amor

Te entrego mi cuerpo y alma

Y te doy mi corazón

Pero una cosa te pido

Que me sigas dando de tu amor

Te amo, Maira.

**From The Beat:** Se nota de bolada que esta chava te tiene loco. Amigo deberías de buscar la manera como no dejar que esta mujer se te escape de tus manos. Si tanto la quieres, te aconsejamos que estes con ella en todo momento. Ahorita no podrás estar con ella, pero una vez que salga tendrás toda la oportunidades de que esta mujer sea tuya.

*You Got Me Crazy*

Every time I see you, I love you more.

And when I kiss you, I want you more

Your look alone makes me fall in love with you,

Your words seduce me

Out of all the candies,

You're the sweetest.

My mind thinks about you

Day after day

Your naturalness and your humility got me in  
love with you,

You're the most beautiful woman

You're the perfect woman

Out of all the stars in the sky,

You're the brightest.

In a garden, you'd be the most beautiful rose

And in my mouth, you're the sweetest fruit

You're the owner of my life and my love

I hand to you my body and my spirit

And I give you my heart

But I ask one thing from you

That you continue giving me your love

I love you, Maira.

-Chiquilin, 150 Crew

**I want you to forgive  
me for all the damage  
that I caused you while  
we were together.**



## Amanecí Pensando En Mi Familia

Yo amaneci pensando en que van a hacer conmigo, si me van a deportar o me van a dejar salir de aqui. Si en caso que me dejen salir voy a trabajar y no volvere a andar usando drogas porque de esta manera sí podré salir adelante y ser alguien en la vida. Quiero ganar mucho dinero y mandarle a mi madrecita que está en México con mis hermanos. No quiero que sufra de dinero y que no te les falten nada en la mesa, y que vayan a la escuela a aprender a leer y a escribir. Quiero mucho a mi familia.

**From The Beat:** Estamos seguro que si te pones esto en mente, lograrás con tu propósito de ser alguien en esta vida. Acuerdate que tienes personas que cuentan contigo, con tu esfuerzo y tu felicidad, no los desepciones. Esperamos que llegues a ser ese alguien que tienes en tus planes. ¡Sigue adelante y ni un paso atras!

## I Woke Up Thinking About My Family

I woke up thinking about what they are going to do to me, if they are going to deport me, or if they are going to release me from here.

If they release me, I'm going to get myself a job and I'm going to stop using drugs because by doing so, I'll be able to come out ahead in life and be someone in life. I want to make a lot of money and send my mother and my brothers that in Mexico some money. I don't want them to suffer from not having money, and I don't ever want them to have something missing from the table. Also, I want my brothers to go to school and learn how to read and write. I love my family very much.

-Ramiro, Santa Cruz

## My World

My world, more of a mother  
And havin no father.

My world, coke, crystal, weed, echos  
And hella bottles.

My world, guns and slugs  
Gangs and thugs.

My world, saggin' pants  
And getting' hecka mugs.

My world, peace and harmony.

My world, sickness and wickedness,  
Vivid shhh like plottin' folks.

My world, punks and skanks  
Suckas think they sick

Because they caught a few cases.

My world, mixed up with  
A gang of races.

My world, outcast and hated.  
Outlawed, but I won't be faded.

Folks wanna kill a cat  
That shhh ain't no joke.

Some of them words

You wish you'd never spoke.

-Fo'Thirty, San Mateo

**From The Beat:** We can't say we'd like to live in your world, as you describe it, but we can say that your description leaves very little out. We particularly like your ending because it sounds like a statement of remorse, sorrow for things said and done that can never be taken back. We all know that regret, and we all hope that we can learn from those words and deeds in order not to repeat them.

## El Favor Que Me Hicieron

Hola. Le escribo para que no se olviden de mí. Me movieron del B4 al B5 porque me peleaba mucho y ellos pensaron que aqui iba a estar con miedo en esta unidad, pero creo que me hicieron un favor porque aqui está bien chigón. En la noche todos nos ponemos a hablar por nuestra ventanas.

También estoy aqui con otros homies y nos la pasamos bien, los cuales algunos están el split program porque ellos calleron preso por la misma cosa, pero como ellos no lo hicieron van a salir pronto. Me gusta más el B5 porque los consejeron son buena onda y todas las noches te dan consejos y hablan contigo. También los otros vatos que estan aqui son buena onda, no se meten con nadie y no he tenido que pelearme.

Mis homies y yo aqui siempre estamos pensando en el homie que murió y siempre decimos que descance en paz Little Trucho. Estamos muy triste porque un buen soldado ha fallecido. ¿Pero bueno que se puede hacer?. Estas son cosas que pasan en la vida.

Nosotros estamos conciente que nos podemos morir algún día, por eso decimos vivir la vida loca y rapida. Todos los días nos tenemos que estar protegiendo de los contraries, pero ni modo, que podemos hacer. Espero que todos los vatos que esten preso que se mantengan unidos. Les digo que hagan lo que sus corazones les digan y no quieran aparentar algo que no son.

**From The Beat:** Nos alegra saber que ahí estas más contento. Esperamos que así sigas de contenta hasta que termines tu tiempo y salgas de ahí. Pero no estamos deacuerdo que vivas tu vida así de rápida y loca. Hay mejores manera en como vivir una vida tranquila y bella, nomas tienes que buscarla. Y también queremos agradecerte por el consejo cuando dices que hay que hacer lo que el corazón manda, y no se alguien que no son.

## The Favor The System Did For Me

Hello. I'm writing to y'all so y'all don't forget about me. I was moved from B4 to B5 because I would fight a lot in B4, and they thought that by moving me to B5 I would get scared, but I think that they did me a favor because it is better in here than in B4. At night, we all chop it up through our windows.

I'm also in here with my homies and we pass our time alright, although my friends are in a split-program because they were arrested for the same thing, but since they didn't commit the crime, they're going to be getting out soon. I like B5 more because the counselors are cool and every night they give you advice and talk to you. Also, the other fools in here are cool. They don't get into it with anyone and I haven't had to fight anyone up in here.

My homies and I are always thinking about our homie who died and we all say "RIP 'Little Trucho.'" We're very sad because a very good soldier moved on to a better place. But what can we do? These are things that happen in life.

We are all aware that we could die at any moment, and that's why we live our lives too fast and crazy. Every day we have to protect ourselves from our rivals, but once again, what can we do? I hope that all the thugs locked up stay united. I'm telling you to do what your hearts say and don't pretend to be someone that you're not.

-Popeye B5, SF/YGC

**Promesas Quebradas**

Yo a las personas que quisiera pedirles perdón por todas las cosas que he hecho y porque no me he portado bien son a mis padres. Pues ellos me aconsejaron mucho antes de venir a este país. Yo les hice muchas promesas como no usar drogas, y ponerme a trabajar legalmente, pero lamentablemente de todo lo que prometí ni una de mis promesas he cumplido. Por eso quisiera pedirle perdón a mis padres y decirles que los quiero.

Quiero escuchar de sus labios que me perdonan. No puedo estar con ellos. Lo que tengo planeado para no seguir quebrando mis promesas es ponerme a trabajar y portarme bien para no volver a este lugar.

**From The Beat:** No te agüites amigo, todo tiene solución en esta vida menos la muerte. Estamos seguros que si te arrepientes ante ellos, te perdonaran, porque todos nacimos para perdonar y para cometer errores. Lo bueno es que te has dado cuenta de los errores y las faltas que has cometido. Esperamos que cumplas con tus metas y así no volver a quebrar una promesa más.

**Broken Promises**

The people whom I would like to apologize to are my parents for all the things that I have done, and because I haven't been on my best behavior with them. Well, they gave me a lot of advice before I came to this country. I made a lot of promises to them, like I would not take drugs and I would get myself a legal job, but unfortunately, I have not kept any of the promises that I made to them. That's why I would like to apologize to my parents and tell them that I love them.

I want to see and hear the words "we forgive you" escape from their lips. I can't be with them. What I have planned so I won't break any more promises is to get to work and behave myself so I won't have to return to this place.

**-Carlos, Santa Cruz**

**Mis Disculpas Son Para Mi Padres**

Yo quiero disculparme si algún daño les hice a mis padres o a cualquier miembro de mi familia. Quiero decirles a mis amigos que me perdonen si me porté mal con ellos en el viaje to the a EEUU. Yo quiero que se encuentren ellos bien y si ellos también se portaron mal conmigo pues también los disculpo.

Quiero que mi familia se encuentre bien y que siempre les recuerdo día a día. Ellos también me recuerdan, le quiero mucho.

**From The Beat:** Esta muy bien que te disculpes por los errores que hayas cometido. ¿Verdad que uno se siente mejor después de haberse disculpado? Esperamos que tus padres como a tus amigos te disculpen la falta. Todos cometemos errores y siempre tenemos tiempo para solucionarlos de la manera correcta y tú lo estas haciendo correcto. Suerte!

**My Apologies Are For My Parents**

I want to excuse myself if I caused any kind of pain to my parents or any other member of my family. I want to tell my friends to forgive me if I ever acted shady towards them on the trip to the US. I want them to find themselves living well off. Also, in turn, I forgive them if they ever acted shady towards me.

I want my family to be living comfortably and I always think about them every day. They also think about me. I love them.

**-Diego, Marin**

**Otra cosa es  
porque la he hecho  
pasar por muchas  
preocupaciones y  
problemas que ella  
no se merece**

**Mis Disculpas a Una Mujer  
Hermosa, Mi Madre**

Hay una persona que le debo una disculpa y esa persona es mi madre porque pienso y creo que le he hecho mucho daño y sufrir. Primero le quiero pedir perdón y dárles las gracias porque si no fuera por esa ella yo no estuviera aquí escribiendo estas pocas palabras dedicada a la persona que me dió la vida. También porque siempre esta preocupada por mí, porque me ha aguantado por todos estos años que he estado con ella.

También creo que es bueno pedir disculpa a las madres porque madre solamente se tiene una. Otra de las cosas por la que le pido una disculpa y gracias es porque a ella no le importa en el problema que yo esté, ella siempre me dice que si ocupo ayuda estará conmigo para cualquier cosa. Otra cosa es porque la he hecho pasar por muchas preocupaciones y problemas que ella no se merece. A usted es a la que le pido disculpa.

**From The Beat:** Tienes una madre tan fabulosa, una madre que te ha sabido dar todo sin condiciones. Tu madre es la madre que cualquier persona desearía tener. Mira nomas todas las cosas que ha hecho por ti, como te ha apollado, como te ha brindado la ayuda desde que nacistes. Esperamos que en verdad veas esto, el esfuerzo que tu madre ha hecho por ti. No crees que ya es tiempo que ella deje de sufrir y empiece a disfrutar de la felicidad que un hijo está supuestamente darle a su madre. ¿Es hora no crees?

**My Apology To A Wonderful  
Woman, My Mother**

There's a person who I owe an apology to and that person is my mother, because I think and I believe that I have caused her much harm and suffering. First off, I want to ask her for forgiveness and thank her because if it were not for her, I would not be here writing these few words dedicated to the person that gave me life. Also, because she's always worried about me and because she has been with me throughout all these years that I've been with her.

I believe that it is good to ask for forgiveness from our mothers because we only have one mother. Another thing that I ask for forgiveness and thank her for is because she doesn't care about what kind of problem I'm in, she's always telling me that she'll be there to help me and be by my side for whatever. Another thing that I forgot to mention is that I have made her go through so many worries and problems that she did not deserve to go through. You, mother, are the one whom I ask for forgiveness.

**-Jv, San Mateo**



## My World

In my world, man  
I'm just a squirrel trying to get a nut  
feel me?  
Try to do what I need to do to survive  
My world is big  
my world is small  
just waitin' until I get that last call  
In my world, I'm a minority  
just another criminal to society  
in the white men's eyes it's like a cycle  
that's not supposed to be broke  
man I wish I had some rope  
so I could choke and relieve my mind  
I wish I had a sign  
that'll show me the way so I can stay out  
When I say out  
I mean out the system forever and eva  
and not come back  
even though I know it's going to be hard  
because I'm emotionally scarred  
That I can't help  
but it's up to me to heal  
and break the cycle  
and not to be in denial  
and accept my past  
and see how long I can last  
without doing dirt  
and try not to hurt or damage  
because I know I'm a savage  
but I don't have to put it out there to show  
like show and tell  
or else I will fail  
This is my world  
so get a clue  
to read this and learn from won't be a fluke  
Say hey  
this is what I have to say  
like it or not!

**-Ju-Nut, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: Just a squirrel tryin' to find a nut, eh? Nice line. But what about that cycle — how are you going to break it? What's it going to take to get out "forever and eva"? It's one thing to spit the message, which is on point, but it's quite another to walk the walk. How are you going to deal with the emotional scars you have? How are you going to make it without doing dirt, without trying to create any damage? How you going to make your world a better world?*

## My Little Brother's Father

I don't really know my biological father, but it does not really matter because I have had a good male role model in my life. My little brother's father has been there for me since I was younger, and I give him all props for being a good man for picking up the next man's responsibilities.

**-Lucky stepdaughter GU, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: You have a really positive attitude, and we're happy to hear your step-father has been there for you. How sad that so many men these days can't seem to be good fathers.*

## To Make It Right Again

In my world I don't know if I'm really in a hurry to go home. I've been here for about four months, and as these days go by and I get closer to being released I feel the worst is yet to come, when I'm put back into a messed up situation, a situation I messed up when I was using.

My dad says he doesn't want to let me back in his house because of the things I had done before my arrest. He says I'm never going to change. What he doesn't know is I wouldn't have ever stole from him if I wasn't on drugs; it was the drugs that changed me.

After being locked up, I've realized a lot of things. I've realized the places I went wrong. When I get out I'd really like to make it right again, especially with my family. My mom says it will take a long while for my brothers and sisters to get over how I was and to realize that drugs make you a different person. My mom says as for my dad, some things will never change . . .

**-Little Foot, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: It may take a while to earn the trust of your family back, but it is scandalous that your dad won't even think of letting you back in the house. It sounds like there are other issues that may be involved in your relationships with your family, especially with your father. Is it possible to get all of the issues out on the table so that you all, as a family, can figure out the best way for you to readjust to the outs without drugs? If not, where else can you find the support you'll need to stay clean and sober?*

## It's A Thrill

Homeboys getting tossed in jail, getting closer to hell.

Well, all I could say is I'll meet you there,  
'cause I dare to stare in evil's direction.

The thrill is so good I even get an erection.

Sometimes I wish I wouldn't awaken,  
'cause sometimes the day goes bad,  
and I hear a homeboy was taken.

I just say to myself, if I was there it woulda been different.

I get stuck thinking, reminiscing about the good days,  
'cause that's all I have left is memories  
about the good old days.

**-Prieto, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: You have much more than memories, Prieto, you have your entire life left to live! If the thrill of the game is like the thrill of sex, then you have to realize that without protection, both can be death sentences. So, how do you protect yourself on the streets? Do you think this protection will always work for you, or can you think of a better (more permanent) form of self-protection? (We find it ironic that the very thrill you describe could lead to you never having the thrill of sex again. Think about it.)*

## In My World

Things are getting better than before and I'm very proud of myself for making them get better. I thank my mama for giving me good advice throughout my life.

But there are still some things I would like to change about how I'm living my life right now, but for the best part it's good. I just have to make the next move and get out of Hillcrest.

**-Roderick, San Mateo**

*From The Beat: What makes this piece a standout, Roderick, is your pride in making your life better for yourself. That tells us you understand where your life has taken the wrong turns, and you know how to right those turns. We're also proud of you. What are those next moves you have to make to get out Hillcrest, and what do you plan to do then?*

**I thank my mama for giving me  
good advice throughout my life.**

## I'm Learning

Where I'm at right now, I'm learning a lot of myself that I didn't know. I think being here is going to help me on the outs because I know I can do things that I never imagined doing, like reading books.

I used to read them but I used to get bored and I just didn't read it no more because I didn't understand it, and now I read a book and I really get into it. It's like watching a movie but you're not, you just have an imagination that pictures things and everybody is smart.

So think about your future. You still could become someone important in life, so learn about your abilities and have a better future and make your family happy. Show them that you are a better person. Show them the good you, not the bad side.

**-Abel, San Mateo**

**From The Beat:** You have a mature attitude towards your time — it gives us a lot of hope for your life back on the outs that you view this time as a learning experience, and it's heartening to hear about your interest in reading. What books have you been enjoying most? What is it that you most want to learn about? How are you going to make sure your good side shines when you return to the outs?

## Letter To Myself

Dear Afro,

What's up? How you been doin'? Still kicking and ticking I hope.

I just wanted to tell you to keep hope alive and don't give up, feel me. You got people who care about you, people who love you, and people who are on your side for real for real.

I love you. Don't trip off these sukas in there, with they emotional outbursts. Misery loves company, and they just want you to be miserable like them.

I talked to your family and your girl, and they said they're behind you 100%.

Well, stay up, get you weight up, and rise up above all this madness. This is a life-learned lesson. So each one, peach one, and teach one, Love you. Stay positive.

**-Afro B4, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We love you, too, Afro, for putting it down week after week, for staying focused on the positive, and for recognizing the need to teach the next youngster coming along. With all that support, there's every reason to believe that you have a bright future ahead. Keep your eyes on the prize.

## Game Passed On

Makin' the scrilla jukin' on the block  
the only thing pops taught was figures and how not to get caught

Nine years old seeing bricks on the living room table  
now gettin' locked up, peep woofin' that shhh, talkin' all these fables

Talkin' 'bout they pushin' keys

the only brick they ever seen in they life is in a movie

On the flip I saw family members gettin' hooked  
doin' the shhh they used to push and the shhh they cooked

No matter the game, there's always a flipside  
the truth of the matter is always gonna come out no matter if you tried to hide

This cycle has gone through my family for generations  
should I stop or continue is the decision that I'm daily facin'

**-T Soldier, San Mateo**

**From The Beat:** It sounds like you've made the decision — as you say, "the truth of the matter is always gonna come out" — and the only question is whether you're willing to make the sacrifices necessary to do what you know is right. Are you going to be cursing yourself, another family member hooked or doing time, or will you flip the script?

## No One Understands

I miss her  
No one understands  
They all think I did it on purpose

We were close

She knew I loved her

She was my best

Now I don't have her.

We had fun that night

Until she got sick

We panicked

But were too scared to get help

We thought we would get in trouble

We did anyways

But she was in more trouble than anyone.

I cry because I miss her

Sometimes I wish it was me

But I can't go back in time

I can't change what happened.

I wish I could

So she would still be with me right now

So we would be able to grow old together

So we would be able to do all the plans we had

Now we can't

Because she's gone.

I love you and miss you.

RIP.

**-Tiny, San Mateo**

**From The Beat:** The tragedy behind this poem is almost too much to conceive — not only did you lose one of your closest friends, you're being blamed for her death, compounding the heartache you already feel. What are the memories of your friend that make you smile? How can you live with an eye towards those things you were hoping to do together, still doing them and taking her memory along with you?

## To Myself

The life you live is hard and you need to change it.  
It's not safe nor right for anyone to live like that.  
You put your life in jeopardy every day you walk outside. If you think that's cool, then you wrong.

The stuff you do don't only put your life in jeopardy, but the life of your family too. And

I know that would hurt you the most if one of your family members got hurt because of you. And I know you saw that happen before.

It's a million and one ways to change your life, and you can start by loving your girlfriend because she says she loves you all the time. Whether she means it or not is up to her, but if she does you have a good girl. I hope your life turns out for the best, and I hope you love yourself forever.

**-Jimmie B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** How will loving your girlfriend change your life? Did you always believe the things you wrote here about putting your family's lives in jeopardy? If not, how did you come to this belief? If loving your girlfriend is one of millions of ways to change your life, can you suggest one or two other ways to do it?



## Sticking Together

They treat us in their hospitals every day. We are young brothers, often drug dealers, gang members, or small-time criminals who show up shot, stabbed, or beaten after a hustle gone bad.

To some of these medical colleagues, they look at us like nameless thugs perpetuating crime and death in neighborhoods that have seen far too much of these things.

And that's what's going on in my community right now. And us being the thugs we fall for it because we wasn't raised in the house with both of our parents. Our parents was on crack wit' no food in the house, nawamean?

But it's nothing. This is what we do. My ninjas stick together like bread an' butter. We all we got. The feds trying to watch us. Man, the feds trying to stop us. But they can't catch us.

**-Cecil B4, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat:* Well, Cecil, there is much in this piece that is right on the money. You're right, "high class" society looks down on you and your homies. But at the same time, we don't think everything you've written is true. For example, you say you stick together, yet we read every day about black people shooting black people, brown people shooting brown people, and "thugs" vs. "thugs." What will it take to stick together for real?

## Cycles

My family has good cycles. I mean, no family is perfect without some people in the family. I have people that have went to college and graduated, and I have people who have went to jail.

I don't think what other people do dictates you because you're different from other people. That's why I do my own thing so that if it is a cycle, it stops with me.

If I am to start a new cycle, I want it to be right so my seeds can follow it. That's all I got this week.

**-Diddy B5, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat:* Well, it's not a good sign that you are in jail (the Hall) for doing your own thing... Maybe you should consider changing what your thing is so that you can move into that college-graduating cycle, and make sure your seeds follow.

## Game Over

It ain't no one to trust but me  
I strive to succeed

But got held back living the life of the streets  
But I gotta make sure I take care of my family  
The system don't give black males many choices  
Once they try to change

So I had no choice — starve or go on the grind  
There was no way around it  
So I hit the strip and flooded the block wit' that good shhh  
But that ain't the life for me  
So when I leave I'm goin' legit  
No more of that hustling shhh  
I'm done

**-SideShow B5, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat:* We like the way you led us through the necessities of putting food in your belly, then to the necessity of giving up the life that leads to jail. Sometimes it's just time to put away the things of childhood and step up to the responsibilities of adulthood. From this piece, we'd say you're ready for that next step. We're behind you all the way. Good luck.

## Don't Know What To Choose

Being abused.

I don't know who to choose

Don't have much to lose but county blues.

My mind is racing

Do I want to go out on the streets paper chasing Or  
steady facing

Sentence after sentence

Without a decision?

The judge sentence me to one year in Colorado  
That makes me want to follow

And do what my heart tells me to do choose

Stop carrying heat by my side

Ready to die

That ain't no lie

I love myself but it's crazy for me

My mom wants me to lose it mentally

What have I done to deserve this kinda pain

It feels like it's going to rain

I'm losing my brains

I think I'm ready to die

But I look up to the sky and realize it's not my time

That's doing time

**-Tiffany GU, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat:* Good flow, Tiffany. It's hard to give up your old ways even when you know that life has brought you lots of pain, but we've seen you change while you've been in the Hall, and we know you're ready for a change. You may love your mom because she brought you into this world, but you sure don't have to like her or how she treats you. Use your heart and mind to protect yourself from those who will try to hurt you; they have problems.

## Remorse

Young homie, you gone

I could've stopped that bullet from piercing yo' soul

But I didn't

Now I'm kinda afraid of the streets

Afraid of the beef

It got me afraid to sleep.

RIP Ray Diddy

**-Don B4, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat:* We gave this tight little poem a standout out for the courage it takes to write that you're afraid. We think only a fool wouldn't be afraid of the level of violence and killing that we read about on the daily, but then, there are a lot of fools out there. We're glad that you aren't one of them.

## Cycles

There's cycles that my uncle started back when he was about my age. My uncle was locked up in B4 back in the '80s when he was gangbanging. And to top it off, he had the same charges as I do ten-fifteen years later. I feel like I'm him sometimes, and I don't like the feeling. I love him and everything, but I see him now, and I don't want to end up like him.

I hope this cycle gets broken when my kids are born because I don't want them to go through all this that me and my uncle went through.

**-Juicy Loo B5, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat:* Once you are aware of the cycle, then it's easier to break it because you can see where it leads. We're sorry your uncle had to go through what you're going through, Juicy Loo, but one thing we know for sure: you are not your uncle. You are you, and you can make decisions for your own life that your uncle probably wishes he had made for his. You owe it to your future children. You owe it to yourself.

## Thoughts In My Head

If I were you I'd be smart,  
 don't try smoking or things that can't get you far.  
 Y'all should listen to these words.  
 Neva have bad stuff goin' on your world.  
 I'm in Juvy and I would know,  
 how life is much better, not in the cold.  
 Don't get the things that can mess you up,  
 Yo' patnas won't be there, not even a drop.  
 Yah feel? Hope you understand what I'm sayin',  
 life ain't all about bacon.  
 Bread you might say,  
 gangs got me in here,  
 now I can't see a day...  
 my story is like a bike chain.  
 It keeps on goin' on and on,  
 hope you understand this... life goes on.  
 Bad things happened to you  
 don't let it bring you down,  
 It's like a domino stack,  
 it's goin' to break everyone's back.  
 Keep your head up never look down  
 that might cost you somethin' — a trip to the ground.  
 If you lost someone, I know how you feel.  
 Life like bien' grilled.  
 Don't feel bad, be happy,  
 they in a better place now, so don't cry.  
 they wish you was there and I wish it too,  
 It can never be crowded up there, not like in Ju  
 time goes on I know it hurts,  
 Don't cry now — get your hopes.  
 Time goes on just pray,  
 'bout that special someone, as you stay.  
 You love that person so much and I love mines too,  
 be happy no boo hoo.  
 Hope I get out it's in 2 days  
 today the 25th now I pray.  
 I pray for everyone that got it bad  
 'Cause I know it's sad.  
 Hope you get out soon too...  
 always pray about your boo...  
 now I'm done talkin' and you guys can think,  
 don't forget keep your head up don't look down.  
 I love you all, get rid of that frown...  
 RIP B 2/28/90  
 RIP P 1/28/04  
 I love you and I always pray for you.

-Gelo, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** It's hard to maintain in a world full of pain. Life can leave a stain and make you feel insane. The memories of our loved ones will never fade and we will all meet again someday. How do you stay positive in an environment fill with sadness? How do you avoid all the madness? How do you keep your head up even when you get fed up?

**I love you all,  
 get rid of that  
 frown...**

## United Playa All Day

United Playas not no hatas 100% know what I'm talking 'bout, Junior! I'm down wit' them 'cause Rudy Corpuz helps me out in a lot of ways, especially with my time that I have been spinnin' locked down.

I can't help it, but I always talk about the program a lot, want to join, and I want them to join. They be askin' me to put them on, but I can't do that if you not serious, like you just want to use this opportunity to get out. Then I say forget it. I ain't callin' dude. That ain't coo'.

To people that's serious enough to want to change they life around holla, 'cause what we do is not a game. It's like a second family for me, no bs. It helps with anything that I need help with. It's a gang prevention thang.

So to all those so-called "married-to-this -game" people, think again 'cause this ain't the life for you nor me. But I takin' it one day, two steps at a time. To those that's ready, step up to the plate. Don't try to manipulate nobody 'cause you only playin' yo'self. From my mouth to your ears. I hope you listen comin' from a young playa that does not play game. Make your life real instead of a comic book. Be easy!!

-Cudabeez B5, SF/YGC

**From The Beat:** We really appreciate this positive message, Cudabeez. But we're not sure whether you're talking about a group that you formed inside, or a group on the outside that helps you. Whichever, we believe the most important ingredient for change is the desire to make it happen. We see that desire in you, so we hope you just hang in there until the time comes when you can put your new philosophy to work for you on the outs.

**They said, "Yo' cousin Trey  
 Dee done died."  
 I stepped back and said, "No!"  
 and tears flew from my eyes.**

## My Last Week

It was June 3rd, 1999.

I walked up out the house to do a grimy crime.

I saw the homies, heads bowed down.

They looked before me and started to cry.

I asked why

They said, "Yo' cousin Trey Dee done died."

I stepped back and said, "No!" and tears flew from my eyes.

Jetted back to the house to tell pops,

he gave me a hug, then I rolled out

Back on the block, started reminiscing on the times

Just a couple days befo' we was posted up

And you was running game on a dime

Stay fly, stay high, can't even believe you died.

Childhood memories stay hurting me

So I spark some trees and just think

about all the good things

While we celebrate, tack out the whole place, leaving

doobies in yo' vase

And I know one day I will see yo' face

So just watch over me and help me go the right way

-Jd B5, SF/YGC

**From The Beat:** If your cousin is watching over you, JD, what do you think he is guiding you towards? If he could speak to you from where he is, what would he tell you? Do you want to "go the right way," or is that just a rhyme?



## Cycle In My Gangsta Family

The cycle in my family is filled with gangmembers, dope dealers, and people that are always incarcerated. First, it was my dad and uncles who were in and out the pen and are still going to the pen. One of my uncles is in High Desert State Pen and the other in San Quentin State Pen and my other uncle's in Santa Rita County Jail with my dad now 'cause they just caught my dad slippin'!

Then my bros and me started to come here, then group homes, the after — we went to Camp, (every one of us) we started to come back to the Halls. Then my bro Goo Goo went to the Y and I might be on my way, but hope I go back to Camp! I'm out!

**-Green Eyes, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Do you want to change this family cycle? Do you want to choose a road that leads to a different path? You might just hit a dead end...

## Young Gato's World

In my world, a lot of things go down. It's the good and the bad, but lately — it's just the bad. But I ain't trippin'; it's just the way my life goes.

Anyways, in my world I seen a lot of shhh! I see the OG's on the corner posted up. I see the lil' youngsters coming up. I see some of my homies are no longer with me.

I see life going by faster than a speeding bullet. I see my mom stressed out because of my decisions. I see my family going through a lot of struggles.

I just wish I could see a better day! But whatever happens in my life, I know not to let anything get me down. That's something I learned from my mom, and I'll never forget it.

To Green Eyes, be coo' and stay up. Hopefully, I'll see you soon .

**-Young Gato, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** It's okay to get down for a minute and feel the pain you cause your mom with your bad decisions. Just don't let it keep you down! Pick yourself up off the ground and get back up in it; not to make the same mistakes all over again but with a whole new plan. Become the man your family needs to see — living a life that's safe, proud, productive, honest and free!

## No Bad People

in my world there would be no crime  
and no bad people  
everyone would go to school  
and learn what they wanted to study  
and would get the job they wanted  
in my world we wouldn't need  
cops or security guards or jails  
everyone would have a big house  
and live the rest of their lives  
with whoever they wanted

**-Jeffrey, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Tell us how to get to your world, 'cause it sounds like a great place to live! Honestly, you can have all those things even in this mixed-up world, but it will take daily work and patient determination.

## Not No One But Myself

What I would ask myself if I wrote a letter to myself, is: How come I am lettin' all my thug friends get in my head when they try to influence me on drugs and negative behavior?

I have to think on my own and not have the next person thinking for me, and I have to make the blame for myself not for anyone else. I have to take word from myself and not from no one else!

I can't stand these fake friends out there trying to make you do wrong. Instead what they need to do is help a friend do right! I see it like this: If you a thug or a hustla, at least help ya boy out on some positive things in life!

It's not always about violence, 'cause you ain't seen the other side of you. Like me, I'm a puzzle; and I'm trying to see the negative side of me along with the positive side. I'm trying to put the pieces together so I can find out what I really need to know about myself!

**-Lee, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We all, to some extent, wear different faces in different places. But when it gets polarized into two sides so opposite that they're almost like different people, it's hard to know who you really are. Maybe with those negative friends on the outs, you thought you had to fit in where you could get in; so you let their ways overly influence your thinking. Now you need to figure out who you are and what you want in life — plus what you don't want, like getting stuck in the system's revolving door!

## The Street Is Addictive

in my world is dope slangin' and gang bangin'  
see people going to jail every day  
'cause they don't know how to stay away  
the streets is addictive for people  
just like dope — they fien' for it

**-Droopy, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** An addict can recover from addiction once he makes up his mind to, if he seeks help and is ready to follow through. No one need die from addiction.

## Think Everything Positive

A letter to myself: If I take a step out myself, I would stop coming to jail and do better for myself.

I'd go to school, back to church, and do what I have to do to stay out of trouble. And I'd be more responsible to my lil' brothers and my sister, so they won't end up in the same position I'm in — because jail is really not a place to be when you know you are a good child like me.

But you just do something that's wrong, and you end up where I am now. And you just start doing a lot of thinking, like — you gon' try to stay out of the way of trouble and do right for yourself and think everything positive.

**-Young Lee, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Everything you say here is positively true! You know exactly what you need to do, both for the ones you love and for you! So do your do! And start today, too! Terrific piece.

## Mental Images

Mental images run through my mind all the time, but these are not images of fond memories. They're disturbing mental pictures that drive me to the edge of insanity!

This is why I can't sleep at night, because I have not found the power to control these images. Every day I struggle to elevate my mind off these images, but it's hard when you keep seeing them in real life and not just in your head!

I run from these images daily, but every day they return. No matter how fast my legs churn, they can't get me away fast enough. I am realizing that you can't run from these problems — you have to face them toe to toe!

Sometimes you lose. Sometimes you can't do anything to battle them. So you better start facing up to them now, before they take you beyond the brink of insanity. Take control of your life and your mind!

Mental images stalk me, but now I have only one way to fight — and that's to write what I feel on paper! This is all I can do, because I have no sword that can defeat them. So the mightiest weapon I got, is this pencil in my hand!

**-Shomoe, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Sorry to harp on your relapse, but knowing this about yourself — why would you return to drinking alcohol? It paves the way for a slide back into using other drugs, too! As far as your battle with these disturbing images, to let them in your mind is not to lose! Let them in the front door, then open the back door and let them out. Learn to treat these mental images like watching a movie. It looks real, but when the movie's over (as long as you don't jump up and do something stupid), the lights come up and the world is intact, though your heart might be beating a little fast. But writing is the greatest weapon you could name, to defeat your inner demons — or to make them tame: they may serve as spiritual allies against the same old same.*

**i see tears falling down  
on earth a big cry**

## A Poem to Myself

i see a world full of crimes and violence  
surrounded by a gangsta nation  
retaliations without hesitations  
assassinations without explanations  
i see tears falling down on earth a big cry  
in your eyes full of pain and disgrace  
'cause the one you loved is going away  
i see drugs and confusions turning into illusions  
minds full of lies not accepting reality  
i can't deny it's hard to recognize  
i realize that life is hard but in order to change  
i need hope and faith to win this game  
so i pray to god every day to give me strength  
to be with my fam' and my beautiful girl  
(i love you dayna)

**-Lil' Will, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: If this poem mirrors the world of your mind, then you aren't lying that your life is hard even when you're not behind bars — but you also stand up tall and the show the courage to face it all. Armed with hope and faith, you will survive this pain and make the necessary change (for yourself, your family and Dayna).*

## My Change of Life

i will be the best man i can be  
in this world of hate and grief  
i don't know why they won't let me be  
i'm eighteen years old  
and i'm ready to be free  
i've learned my lesson  
and i'm tired of stressing  
my mother be worried  
and i make her cry  
when i tell a lie  
my girl is pregnant  
and she said she's keeping it  
i told her i'm not ready  
but if it's something she wants  
then i'm willing to support  
all the things i go through  
i'm suddenly getting tired  
and soon i'm getting released

**-Kevin, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Don't ever get confused about what child support means, 'cause it is far from just a money thing. Better you do your best to live a life blessed with honest labor for honest pay and buy what you can that way — 'cause go back to your old way and in a few minutes you'll lose your freedom, your baby and your pay. Okay? Be a daddy that's square, a daddy that's there!*

## In My World...

In my world  
Suckas don't survive  
In my world  
Females and money is my prize  
In my world  
You gotta be down to ride  
In my world  
It's all about Samoan pride  
In my world  
When you see them boys,  
You better run, duck or hide  
In my world  
All cops tell more than one lie  
In my world  
Selling drugs and hittin' licks is my free  
ride  
In my world  
All the old folks pray their youngstas  
don't die  
In my world...

**-Big Samoa, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Do you think that your world is a scary place? Do you ever wish some parts of your world could be replaced? What do you think your freedom is worth? Do you ever stop to think that this lifestyle is leading you to something worse than a curse... maybe a hearse?*

**In my world  
All the old folks  
pray their youngstas  
don't die**



## *The Summer: Part Two*

man it's looking pretty outside  
sexy females out there  
nice cars ridin' past with the police behind them  
you smell the air  
it smell' like nothin' but a weed-world out there  
we have people in prison and juveniles  
that just builds up the stress  
while other people dead  
or they just out there living that life  
it's a shame when the summer comes around  
anything can happen  
'cause people gon' be acting up  
and they don't give a what about no one  
i think when the summer comes around  
the world is unprotected  
it be more violence than ever  
because the weather is hot  
and the streets gon' be packed with  
everything and anything out there  
ask yourself where you want to spend your summer  
on the hot streets which will lead to jail or death  
or you could be spending your summer vacation  
in a much better respect in a non-violent place

**-Lee, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** But where do you go in the summertime if the hot street is right outside your door, and your family can't get away for a vacation for more than a week, if at all? But wouldn't it be great if you could get whisked off to the beach every day? Or an amusement park? Or a summer camp where the day could be made up nothing but fun from dawn till dusk? Yeah, a lot of folks call summertime on the street, funk season! It's no place to be.

## *They Plot On Me And I Plot Back*

I'm fighting for my life. Five on one, I'm all by myself I want to just run. But I got to stay strong; at least I ain't fallen yet. Then it's really going to be over. I still got a chance. I ain't down for the count.

Damn why me? Wrong place at the wrong time, can't do shhh about it but keep defending myself. That's how I feel. Every time I'm face to face with the judge, all I hear from behind a door is, Lamar ain't never going to change. The DA says how do you know what I want to do? Do you know what I'm thinking? 'Cause if you do, you would know I'm plotting on you just like you have been plotting on me since the age of twelve. Screw it, plotting on you is worth going to hell.

Five on one is how much power the judge has over us, but I still stay strong. The judge said, son you're going back to CYA. I say, I ain't yo' son and laugh because his words hurt so much, and say thank you. I'm thinking should I throw this chair at him and tell him screw you. I'm going to CYA anyways, but I don't let my thoughts take control of my actions.

I hope it was a dream. I don't want to go back but it is as real as it seems. Damn, back to CYA.

**-Lil' Lc, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Sometimes the bad things that happen to us are blessings in disguise. Maybe going to CYA is saving you from a worse situation. Maybe you can learn some new things from your stay in YA. If you go back to CYA with a negative attitude, then things may turn out negative. But if you in with a positive attitude, then maybe you can get something from it.

## *If This World Was Lazy's*

in my world the feds prisons drug dealers  
would all be workin' for the homeboys  
in my world all the homeboys  
would be doing big thangs  
so they could give back to their familias  
and give back to their varrios  
in my world there would be no wars in california  
in my world i would have a mansion  
with a backyard full of pit bulls  
and i'd have the entire bay as my swimming pool  
i'd have big time killas on my team like the president  
in my world i would own me a city full of homeboys  
(even though i already got that)  
all the homeboys and their familias would never go broke  
and to all those up at camp the hall  
group homes c-y-a or r-o-p  
stay strong and keep your heads up

**-Lazy, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You can't think of a way to feed families besides dealing drugs? And to whom will you sell, to families in the varrios you want to help? Lazy, you are too intelligent to stay this twisted, as if trying to impress all the gangsters that ever existed. Beat the system by expanding your vision beyond "feds, police, drug dealers, prisons" — or be their slave to the grave.

## *In My World*

in my world people run freely  
in my world everything has meaning  
in my world death is normal  
in my world if there's money to be made we make it  
sometimes we take it  
whether right or wrong in my world  
everything happens for a reason  
karma comes and goes without warning  
in my world it comes on swift wings  
in my world the people fight to have strength  
in my world everyday it rains  
because of pain this world maintains  
in my head it floods to drown the violence that it's fed  
i see the lives through the eyes of people  
it's simple to see the true shade of color that lies beneath  
with just a peek i can tell  
a hater in my world i can smell  
in my world the impossible is nothing  
check my background if you think i'm bluffing  
in my world everyone is equal  
in my world there is no jail no police no judge  
because in my world there's only one who can judge  
only god can judge me in my world

**-Ben, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Two magnificent poems in one week, both in a single issue of The Beat! You describe your world with a force that's hurled at the speed of a Big Unit heater striking at the consciousness of your reader [Big Unit, Diamondbacks; if you follow baseball: he pitched a perfect game on the power of his fastball]. Particularly complex are those three lines: "in my world it rains / because of pain this world maintains / in my head it floods to drown the violence that it's fed" — that flood of pain drowning out the violence your head is fed by the world, is an amazing extended metaphor that covers a lot of ground to stop at the doorstep of compassion! Great work, Ben. Let the God who judges you, speak to you, and continue to guide you to and all the way through that door marked compassion, forevermore.

## *Just a Little Note*

never knew that i'd be laying here  
feels like a forty-four mag' aiming near  
my head my brain my mind  
unwanted with no love  
feel like someone released  
a vicious drug  
into my vital signs  
love is so blind  
it pulls the wool over your eyes  
now i struggle and cry  
feel like i'm fixing to die  
living life with love  
is like a sugar-coated donut  
with extra glaze  
livin' life with no love  
it's like your heart  
gets locked in a cage  
fifteen years of rage  
trying to remember the good days  
get on my knees and pray  
to jesus that he  
let the goodness in my heart blaze  
raise feelings that will amaze  
so bright they'll daze  
'cause his word saves  
i'm trying to win the struggle  
trying to find a way out of this trouble

**-Baby Face, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Your poem is so much more than a note: it's a lyric that gives voice to despair and then moves toward a choice that will raise your spirit to where love lives. It gives hope where there is none, comfort when you need some, and a way through these troubled days in which you struggle to be saved from the choices you mistakenly made yesterday. It's not a note but a poet's prayer, sung by angels in God's ear.*

**Can't express my feelings to no  
one except a bed, wall, door,  
or pillow.**

## *My Room*

When they send me to my room a depressed and lonely feeling fills my body, mind and soul. When I'm alone in my room, I feel deserted in one place, feels like my body and soul ain't mines but the system's. Feels like I can't breathe, see or do anything without asking. Feels like I'm alone in a small place.

Can only go far enough without getting in trouble. Can't breathe fresh air, can't meet new people, can't feel love, happiness, can't feel touch. Can't express my feelings to no one except a bed, wall, door, or pillow. Feel like I can't live without people, friends, family. It's like water, without it you dehydrate. Makes me wanna cry, cry till I can't no more. That's why nothing is worth being here?

**-Karla, San Luis Obispo**

*From The Beat: What's up with the question mark at the end? You think there might be something worth getting locked up? The cell can be one of the loneliest places. What can you do to keep sane? You're lucky you have family and friends you love. Do you think being locked up makes you appreciate them more?*

## *Life / Hood / Love*

my life  
is not a good life  
because people be fighting  
and smoking  
and killing each other  
that's how  
my life is  
my hood is  
a bad hood  
people be getting  
killed in my hood  
in my hood people just  
don't care no more  
but you know what  
if one care  
we all care  
long as i care  
that's all that counts  
i love my mama  
i love my father  
i love my sister  
i love my brother  
i love the world  
i love the girls  
i love the community  
i love my country

**-Lil' Ward, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: You begin by saying that "what they do" defines your life, but then you change the focus to "how you feel" — and you redefine yourself on your own heart's terms: in terms of whom and what you love. Thank you for a marvelous poem!*

## *The Reason I'm Locked Up*

When I look out my window, I wish I could go back to the past and correct my mistake, which would allow me to still be with my friends and go to school. I wish I were out there doing what a teenager does before adulthood.

I like the way my life was before I came to this place. I was free, able to do things I wanted. When I walked through the locked doors in handcuffs, I felt as if my life was over. When I got that phone call from my mother telling me that she didn't want me anymore, I felt my heart shatter. Now I won't get to be with my best friends or even graduate with them.

I feel as if I have no place in life now. My mother abandoned me for one dumb mistake. I don't know where I'll be in five or even ten years from now, but I know I will be the best I can be. I'm almost eighteen years old; I have a whole future ahead of me that I want to succeed in. Well, let's see what my life is like in ten years.

**-David, San Luis Obispo**

*From The Beat: We're sorry about the phone call with your mom. What would you do if you had a kid that got locked up for the first time or was locked up several times? Would you do the same or different? What do you want to succeed in? Finishing school? Having a loving group of friends and family? Getting a job you love? If you could choose any kind of life, what would your life look like in 5-10 years?*

## The Beat Within

When I look out my window I just wish I could be free  
And swim along society like a fish in the sea  
Plus take back all the crimes that got me this misery  
But you know what they say, what goes around comes around  
So why is it when you're high the system gots to throw you down?  
They say they want to help us, but a hand is never lended  
I go to school and do my work, but I still end up suspended  
Makin' me hate this life and wishin' I could end it  
But I keep my head high and don't let it get to me Just let me breathe  
and let me see  
the right paths for you and me  
maybe if we knew what to do, we all could succeed  
But if that's not what they want, maybe we shouldn't try  
All the dead gangsters fought over funk, thinking they couldn't die  
My homie got clocked in a rumble; he's now with a wooden eye  
So I need to end this lifestyle 'cause I know right from wrong  
It's just an act we put on every day, all day long But I'm not free,  
thanks to me, and it really makes me pissed  
So when I look out my window, I know all I can do is wish!

**-Eric, San Luis Obispo**

*From The Beat: Knowing our paths would make life easier, but it would make it more boring, too. Do you believe you make your own path, or do you think it is predetermined? You bring up a good point that the system has a lot of power to help you or hurt you. If you could have a meeting with the chief of Juvenile Hall, what suggestions would you have for ways Juvenile Hall could help you?*

## Freedom

In my world, the food tastes like it's been recycled. The people only smile 'til they remember where they are, and the people with the power have no idea how to use it. In my world, you do what you're told or you sit in a cage. You sleep in a cage, because you don't deserve to be anywhere else. In my world, you only want the one thing you can't have — to leave.

**-Conrad, Marin**

*From The Beat: Your work is always so thoughtful, Conrad. You must have realized that a lot of youth in Juvy have had to live unimaginatively sad, difficult confusing and tragic lives. Many are struggling just to stay sane and are trying desperately to manage their young lives. Do you really believe y'all deserve to be stuck in cages? Do you think you deserve to live in a cage? Why?*

## Cycles In My Family

Addiction is a cycle in my family. My grandfather, my mom and I are addicts. I am always getting in trouble for being drunk or high. My mom is in a program and was always trippin'. Now I am in a twelve-step program and everything has gotten better.

My parents are very proud of me and what I am doing. I am only in here now because of what some stupid kid said about me. But when I am out I will go to a meeting.

**-Ben, Marin**

*From The Beat: Congratulations, Ben. Get all the help you need. Since you have realized that addiction seems to cycle in your family, can you resolve that you will not get sucked in? Is your dad not addicted to anything? If not, can you learn from his strength to build a life without depending on anything except yourself? You go!*

## Not Going to Go Wrong

(a letter to myself)  
hanna don't fall down  
keep your faith  
don't compete with the females  
who stay in your face  
hanna you are strong  
you been hangin' in for so long  
when things get complicated  
continue to move on  
you have the patience  
can't nothin' erase it  
you're making it through  
i know you can take it  
they waiting for you to slip  
but you walk on  
hanna you know  
you not going to go wrong

**-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: It's hard enough being incarcerated without all that noise from the mouths of haters! It's a major distraction from what you need to be feeling, but you walk on, stay strong — keep dealing and healing!*

## My Dad

One day my dad was perkin' and he was beatin' my step-brother, so I just ran up and dipped him, wrapped my arms around him and threw him on the ground. So after I dipped him, I just worked him over with, like, fifteen face shots and then my brother came over, just kickin' him hella times in the ribs, and my dad had to go to the hospital, because we broke his cheek bone and three of his ribs.

My stepbrother, when he punched my dad, his hand slipped off his face and smashed into the concrete, and the worst thing was the next day my dad didn't remember beating my stepbrother. He was too drunk. My dad is in the joint for another felony. He has two strikes already.

We both smoke weed and cigs

We both drink

We both are depressed

We both get angry

**-Yung J, Marin**

*From The Beat: It was important that you stepped in to protect your stepbrother, but it's against the law to beat someone beyond self-defense or the defense of another. How do you feel about your dad now? Is there anything about him you love? Do you visit him in the penitentiary? Are you concerned that you may be learning from your dad to settle your business by using your fists? What other*

**My dad is in the  
joint for another  
felony. He has two  
strikes already.**



## What's Wrong With You?

T, what's wrong wit' you? After all that sayin' you wasn't comin' back, here you are again. Once again you are in here for being involved. All you had to do was keep to yourself. When you heard all that noise, you should have stayed in the house and everything would be gravy. If you know you are on probation and if you are seen around anything, the police can pick you up. What was the point of goin' towards trouble?

If anything, you were supposed to close your window and forget there was something going on. Now you are in the Halls again, and you don't even have a good reason. I don't have anything else to say to you.

**-Terrell, Marin**

**From The Beat:** Great letter of advice to yourself, Terrell! You speak some wonderful wisdom to yourself! It sounds like you know how to avoid trouble and that you usually stay away from it. You are strict and hard on yourself, which is good, but you also have to forgive yourself and move on.

## Judge This

To condemn me is never to put a thought that my existence is similar to yourself. But what separates us is the choices or fate we have.

You are the judge, the closest thing on earth to becoming god. And in some sick way, I am condemned invisible because, like god, once you judge me you will never have to see me again.

Does this bring you joy to know that in your mind you play god? Do you realize that you have the power to change people's lives forever? But because you think you are god, you believe that you are perfection.

How can you judge a man's life through a moment in time, never realizing the lifetime of suffering this man has gone through? The moment that led up to the wrong decision, a man whom nobody would help but only condemn. A man who begs for help, but out of desperation he commits a crime, never able to place in his mind that he has any bit of hope and that this cold hunger is his reality. And hunger is real.

**-Dru YTEC, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We can see you put some thought into this piece. Since you are being so critical, what do you think the judge should have done with your case? Put yourself in the judge's shoes. After seeing your face for X number of times, what would have been the reasonable thing to do? You also have the power to change not just your own, but other people's lives as well. So what are you going to do to change your life? While you may have been guilty of simply a lapse in judgment, or a victim of harsh circumstances, you need to understand the position the judge was put in as well. There are always two sides to story.

## A Letter To Myself

Dear Self,

I'm now on the outside looking in, and Self, I see a lot of things that you need to change.

First of all you need to change your attitude at times. Sometimes the way that you respond and talk to people is uncalled for.

Oh yeah, and Self, you need to learn how to be a bit more organized. Sometimes you can be very scattered, and you procrastinate at times when you don't need to.

Make up your mind with your hair. You need to feel that you are beautiful even if your hair is not done. Clean your room. Have more patience with yourself and people. Try these things, Self, and you will have more fun in life.

**-Keneshia YTEC, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Thank you for writing exactly on topic. How are you going to teach Self to do the things that Self needs to do? It seems pretty easy for you to call Self on these things right now, but how will you make sure to keep Self in line when these things come up?

## What We Think And Feel

I can't think of what to write about, so I just want to say thank you Beat for giving all us kids and young adults a chance to write about what we think and feel.

And thank you to all the men and women in prisons — your writings really inspired me and got me to think twice about what I'm gonna do when I get out. Thank you.

Lastly, I'll miss you Miss Wadud.

**-Ashley, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We appreciate when someone steps up and lets us know how much they appreciate The Beat. Expressing yourself, and inspiration from others is really what The Beat is about. We wish you the best and would love to hear from you on the outs in The Beat Without.

## My Life Cycle

Today is May 25, 2004, and The Beat came through.

I'm from San Jose and I was raised around gangsters. I have tios and tias that are old Gs. I have cousins that are between the ages of twelve and twenty that be claiming a certain color. I honestly think fighting over a color is dumb.

Why fight over a color? We are all Latin or Hispanic! Me, what I'm trying to say is to all you young, wannabe gangstas, think about your family — especially your mother. Think, is this gang shhh worth jeopardizing my life or my family's life?

Man, I'm just letting y'all know 'cause I've seen it all for real. I have a brother who is twenty-three now and has seen nothing but walls since he was fifteen years old. I haven't seen him for over six years.

So when y'all lil' wannabes think y'all big and do something stupid, think twice.

**-Erika, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** This is excellent advice. What was it that made you realize, what's most important? You've been through a lot, what advice would you give to your twelve year old cousin, raised in the same environment that you were raised in? How can you stop this cycle, before it's too late?

**You are the  
judge, the closest  
thing on earth to  
becoming-god.**

## Things About My Family

In the cycles in my family are that we have a lot of alcoholism, arguments, and hatred. But it's not that bad because we can still work out these problems sometimes, but the thing that really lacks in my family is having a father figure.

Since I was a child I didn't have my father, but my uncles have played the roles as one. The main one that takes me out to parks is my uncle Miguel. My uncle Tomas teaches me about working in houses and roofing, mean while my Uncle Dolores shows me about morals in life and shares his knowledge with me about his past drug uses, and how to stay away from it because drugs are always going to escalate you to worse things in life.

My Uncle Jorge is a drug addict but he has shared his experiences in life and really reaches out to the people on the good stuff and helps us to not be focused with the bad parts of life, and motivates us in to great things in life.

**-Jesus, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** It sounds like even though you lack a father figure, you still have a stable family who cares a lot about you. Keep the relationship that you have with them strong because in the end after friends and associates have faded away, they'll be there with you. Are you a role model for anyone? Do you think you'll be good role model for your future children?

## Put Mom Through Stress

Every day my mom stress  
Every day my mom cry,  
Every night she can't sleep,  
Every day she think about her kids puttin' her through  
stress, makin' her come to court every day for you,  
Because she loves you.  
My mom has ten kids . . .  
Seven kids went to jail,  
And they were six boys, one girl.  
It went to the oldest boys, to the youngest girl.  
My oldest brother, named Moo, he went to jail for goin'  
with a young girl.  
My brother Kosal, he went to jail for a stolen car.  
My brother John, he went to jail for a stolen car, too.  
My brother David, he went to jail for a 211.  
My younger brother Chamreoun, he went to jail for 211.  
And the younger girl, named Lisa — that's me — I went  
to jail for prostitution and I almost got killed.

**-Lisa, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** What a sad situation your mother must be in. What do you think about this? Is this a normal family to you? Do you communicate with your mom? Are you going to change your ways? Have you talked to your brothers? What can you do in this situation to make it better? Sometimes it takes people to hit rock bottom before they can rebuild. Would you say that you've hit the lowest point? What are your plans now? We want to know, what now?

## A Purple Bunny Flew

the day was dark  
and the night was cool  
from around the corner  
a purple bunny flew  
it had bright purple wings  
and a dark purple body  
it was the fastest thing alive  
and bigger than everybody  
nobody could keep their eyes on it  
but only when it perched in a tree  
it was big as an elephant  
and ten times bigger than me

**-Diego, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Your poems should be "purplexing" — but our imaginations they're affecting like dreams or scenes from childhood fantasies! So they feel naturally satisfactorily real.

## A Letter To Myself

If I could step outside one more time, I would not step foot back in these juvenile system again. I would get my life together and I would be in no more stolen cars again. I will get my life together. I will step up and be a father to my baby. I will do better in school I will get a job and I will basically get my life together.

A lot of people say that they will not be in this juvenile system again but like the following week they be right back for another case, but not me. I will be the one to get my life together because life is too short and I need to live to see a hundred, and this juvenile system is not the way to live.

Momma told me I will end up in this juvenile system but I never thought it was like this. The food is nasty, your locked up half of the day, you have to take showers with other minors and that's not the way to live.

When I get out there, I will make a complete change in my life. I want be a father to my kid.

**-Robert, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** What kind of changes do you need to make with your life on the outs so that you will live to see a hundred? What can you do to make it so that your future will be better than your past? What are some lessons that you want to instill in you child?

## Words For Me

I look at the drama and wish I could change it,  
Going to the block and seeing the same shhh,  
The world is corrupt, not in its right mind,  
Time keeps going, no way to rewind,  
Just look to the future, no time for the past,  
It ain't all about fast cars and cash,  
I hope you get this letter and think of your life,  
Get a nice girl and make her your wife,  
Money comes quick, but quicker it goes,  
Get out the game put down the foe foes,  
I'm writing this so you can see future, me,  
You tell by my writing I'm a newer.

**-Young Skitz YTEC, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Wise words Young Skitz. Since you already have "received" this letter, you can start thinking about your life right now.

it was big as an  
elephant  
and ten times bigger  
than me

## Until I Used the Phone

April 20, 2004 was a coo' day until I used the phone. Well this shhh's messed up! Let me start it by how my day went.

Well first I woke up in the morning and in max unit they always be havin' oldies on. So I started to think about my dad and hopin' he was coo'!

After that, staff came and got me for wash up. After wash up I came back to my room then I started wondering why I was thinking about my dad so much! Then they came and got me for breakfast and after the day went on, going to school and playing handball with the homeboys.

When I was doing all that, I had been thinking about my dad and little sister because her birthday is about to come on May 31, 200. She will be 8 years old and I won't be out to be with them and just be with my family and have fun!

Well the next shift comes (3 to 11) then we do large muscle and I had to do 45 laps, and all I thought about was how my dad taught me how to never give up and be a soulja.

Then we ate dinner, and an hour later we came out for rec, when it was my turn to use the phone I called my aunt Jami and she was soundin' like she just got done crying! I was thinking in my head like what's wrong. She said, your dad went back to jail today, and I was thinking why you crying for that — he's been to jail hella times. She said that they beat the shhh out of him and he is in the hospital, then she started to cry a little.

Then I got hella mad and felt something inside that I never felt before, so I held it in, but, the anger that I feel I can't hold it in no more! I can't do shhh, can't even see my pops, shhh messed up!

Every time I listen to oldies in my room like I' am now, it reminds me of the times I had sittin' back sippin' on a beer with him in his ride! It reminds me of everything I did with my dad! Knowing I ain't gonna see him for a year or two builds up a lot of anger inside me.

I feel like I am about to blow up, 'cause Hayward police hella messed up. That's why I say forget the HPD and gang task force 'cause they been wantin' to get my pops for a year or so! But the only reason he got caught is because someone dropped a dime on him!

So the Hayward police blocked off all the streets and got him but when they pulled him out of his car by his homeboy's house, they beat the shhh out of him. I heard he was all messed up. That's why I do the things I do to get all this anger out!

And to my pops, I just want to let you know in this letter that I hope your doing coo' and I know you're holdin' it down all the time. I can't wait till you get out so we could do the same shhh from givin' me rides to places, sippin' on a beer to you pullin' up on us and passing the homies beer! We use to just kick it! That's what I wanted to do when I get out, but now I got to wait till you get out!

Dedicated to my dad big Go Goo! Your son,

**-Green Eyes, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** The cycle we see in your life is terrible. What's gonna happen when you have kids? Would you want your kids to write a piece like this about you? How can you break the cycle of incarceration and gangbanging? 'Cause this is only bringing you and your family further down. What do you really want for your own future and the children of your future? Think! Think beyond the hood and the homies!

**We ain't progressing, we like crabs  
in a bucket stopping each other from  
reaching the top.**

## Stop Doing Me Wrong

Staff' always putting me in my room for something that I didn't do 'cause one of these fake ass ninjas said something that wasn't true. So what I'm suppose' to do, it's hard over here and we ain't really getting treated fair.

But Lil 'Johnny-G don't want me to take it there. But Lil' Shawn said to Dirty-De, "It's time to shine."

And I look back at Lil' Shawn and said, "We ain't got nothing but time."

He said, "Get yo' mind off of that because we have to stunt and shine because you know that the Summer is coming back up and I'm trying to make that mine."

I said, "Lil' Shawn, we are behind these walls and the way I've been thinking, I ain't going to make it very far."

But Lil' Shawn and Johnny-G said, "You are my bra-bra, and we ain't never gon' let you fall. So until this day, we be bra-bra to the end."

**-Lil' Dirty-De, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** This is creative with the dialogue/conversation in it. It's important to support each other while incarcerated. You are right that if you continue to think the way you do and eventually get out and continue doing what you were doing, you won't make it very far. It's reality, Dirty-De and you see it. Support each other but don't fool each other. Peace.

## In My World

In my world, I see temptation everywhere I turn. Up and down, left and right, everyone's a gangsta in my sight.

It's hard to avoid trouble because even if you don't look for it, it will look for you. The only choice left is to back yo' self up from it, and stand up for what you believe in. All gangstafied homies in the Hall must achieve it.

Everybody throwing up they set, yelling out they 'hood. Police up to no good. They can't stop us, but if we restrain they'll pop us. We laugh in the' face as they laugh in ours.

They think they winnin', but the truth is none of us are. We are the same color, same race, come from the same ancestors and both movin' at a very slow pace. We ain't progressing, we like crabs in a bucket stopping each other from reaching the top.

We ain't the only ones in this world, there's others on top, on the high rise, livin' it up watching us drop. You see 'em everyday if you didn't know. Hit the power button on the TV and let it go.

Damn, who do you see — the president, wonder what he's up too today? He looks insane, and the speech he gives us, it like a re-run of Pinky And The Brain. "You can read it in his eyes. He wants to conquer the world" and build his own enterprise.

That's what I see in my world, can you visualize it?

**-Lil' John, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** If it's a catch 22 (a lose-lose situation), then why do you choose to play? Don't you know that those who choose to play will pay? Do you want to change anything inside your world or in your mind? Where do you think your actions will take you in due time? Solid on topic writing.



## *I Heard Ya*

I heard ya when you told me to stay off the block  
I heard ya when you told me to beware of the cops  
I heard ya when you told me ninjas stay runnin' plots  
I heard ya when you told me not to carry the glock  
I heard ya when you told me that I'm gonna to get wash'  
I heard ya when you told me that I'm gonna to stay hot  
I heard ya when you told me that I'm gonna get pop'  
Now look at me wearing YGC socks

**-Matrix B2, YGC/SF**

**From The Beat:** Now that you have not only heard but seen what can come of being out there, what are you going to do to make things better?

## *An Apology I Owe To You*

Ma, I'm so sorry for hurting you  
Causing you stress and pain,  
you didn't deserve it boo  
I can't front, you have something I need  
My sunflower, in the future I want to have some of  
your seeds  
Finally realized you have a mind of your own  
I hope you see that I'm sincere to the core  
Because I never want to see  
your tears sink into the floor  
Not only will I give you the world  
But I will go fishing for clams just so I can give you  
the pearl  
Bad times, I'm sorry for them  
To let you know I really mean it,  
I want to say I'm sorry again

**-Avery, Virginia**

**From The Beat:** This is a sweet apology. Why do we hurt the ones we love? Is it because we have some problems to take care of? Is it because they hurt us in some way or didn't protect us? Is it because we are only thinking of ourselves? What is it for you? What is your plan of action to better yourself to prevent hurting your mother again?

**I hope you see that I'm sincere to the core  
Because I never want to see your  
tears sink into the floor**

## *The Sun Shines*

The sun shines bright in my life because my little girl has come into my life.  
She is like an angel in the sky that's fueling me,  
the most happiest dad in the world.  
And I feel so high and happy when I get home to my baby and my wife.  
And now that this life is hard but family gets me through it.  
Suckle sweet, like honey and tasty  
When I get home, I'm going to hold her tight  
and make love to her until the sun comes up and into our window.  
Some people ask me what is life and I just say,  
"Life is an adventure and you don't know what is going to happen next."

**-Mr, Virginia**

**From The Beat:** Congratulations on your baby girl and having a loving wife. This is a beautiful poem to them. You're right, the future is unknown but do not let yourself be like a leaf in a river, floating all over the place. In what direction are you going? You have a family and have more control over your life than you think. Plan, prepare and be patient but persistent with all your goals. Your family needs you. Get support when you need it and don't give up.

## *Unveiling Reality And Apologies*

People in the past are real messed up.  
You wish you can unveil their muck,  
so other people don't fall into vain and despair.  
My dad was someone like that.  
A two-face.  
He'll say something and do another thing.  
All I want to say is I'm sorry.  
Sorry for making you feel bad all the time.  
Putting you through this.

**-Frog, Virginia**

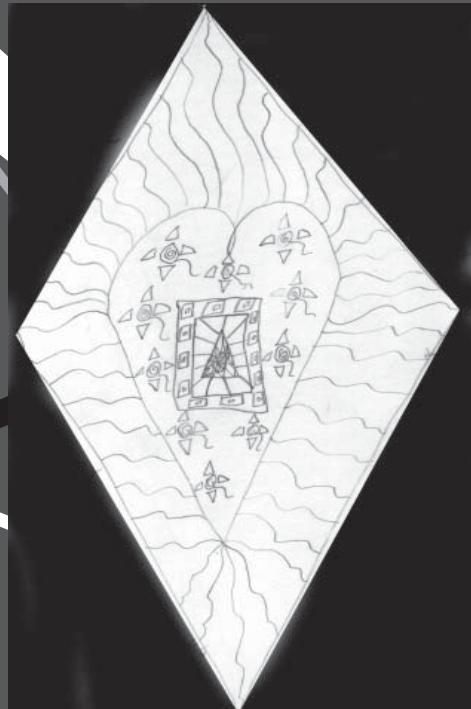
**From The Beat:** This is absolutely incredible writing in such few lines! There is something very healing in your admitting your father's inadequacies and also your own mistakes. Parents are not perfect and neither are we, but we cannot let our parents off the hook without expressing our disappointment and sorrow, and we cannot continue hurting others and ourselves. Keep expressing yourself and figuring out what you will do and what you will not do and how you are going to make this happen.

## *It's Serious*

People always say nothing is too serious  
Until something happens to them  
Tragically and emotionally  
It's serious when you can't take care of your self  
It's serious when a drunk hits you head on.  
It's serious when you can't trust no one  
It's serious if you don't know your own future  
It's serious when you don't know your own blood  
So my advice to you is,  
"wake up and kiss reality in the face."

**-Frog, Virginia**

**From the Beat:** Nice advice! What is reality to you? Do you feel that life can be like a dream and that we are stuck in the past or thinking of the future and never completely there? How have you dealt and how will you deal with the serious things that have happened to you? Best wishes.



## Day By Day

I live one day at a time. Every morning I wake up and think to myself, "Why did I make the decision that I made?" And every day I come up with the same solution. "I'm only human and humans make mistakes."

I'll be out of here soon I hope. Everybody, all my friends that have been in jail, and every body that's in jail, tell me once you're in the system, it's almost impossible to get out. I always tell myself it can't be that hard to stay out of jail.

This is my first time being in jail, but I did a serious crime, and I'm in max unit. When I get out of jail, I figure it can't be that hard to just do the right thing, and don't do anything to violate your probation. I don't know how it will be because I've never had the experience of getting out of jail and doing something to violate my probation or to catch another case to end up in here.

I tell myself every morning that I won't come back to this shhh. So I just take it day by day until I get that good release, and get back on the outs again.

**-Lil' Greg, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You are lucky that this is your first time and you get to hear what it's like to be locked up, free and locked up again. We encourage you to not just say you will do the right thing but also figure out what things can get you caught up again and make some decisions, find some support and communicate with loved ones as much as possible. You can be the one that doesn't come back. It will be hard but it is possible.

## Just Feel It

Y'all don't know about my struggle  
I been throwing these knuckles  
Ain't got no time for the fuss-le  
Better be ready to tussle

I flex my mind, ain't got to flex my muscle  
Don't knock it till you try it, so don't knock my hustle  
I bein' don' it since back in the days I Bill Russell  
It's cold here so bring you a cover  
Ya quick to get smothered  
Lock up my feelings, ready, shoot  
The system leave ya with wet boots  
And a white T

You givin' me no programs so I gotta get hifey  
I been lock' up for 90 days, that's months since I seen my wifey  
I ain't livin' for respect, so I don't care if you like me  
In my hood, it's beefin' season  
I be the last brother sleepin' and breathin'  
I sing a note to yo' heart like Alicia Keys an'  
Grindin' ain't got no paper, so what's the reason  
Got to hustle with ninjas just like me, 'cause ninjas hatin'

**-Hampton, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We feel you on some of your lines. But for some, we just have to wonder when you will learn. We're not knocking your hustle, we are just being real and stating the obvious. If you hustle, you end up incarcerated, dead and if neither of these happen right away, it all eventually catches up with you somehow. We would like to hear more about your struggle. You got clever rhymes, what about clever actions and an intelligent mind?

## More You Hate

It ain't nothing to me  
My game done graduated with a master's degree  
And you still 1st grade elementary  
No, I'm not pimpin' D's  
Or havin' young ladies dedicate they wealth to my safe and key  
Suckas talk 'cause they hate them self  
You live to sit on somethin' but I'm tryin' to make the shelf  
Let's talk about scrilla cake,  
let my portfolio be worth a few mil' in real estate  
Before I decide to scrape  
Receivin' royalty checks rest my life off platinum tapes  
That's all real, where's any fake?  
See I got plans, just made a few mistakes  
My flows turn foes to chicken mix, I mean oven-baked  
When all is straight, CNN gon' broadcast an estimate of what I make  
And my source of inspiration is the more you hate

**-Dolla Deesa, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Stay inspired to make it big, Dolla Deesa. We hope you make money legit from your talents and not off of exploiting others and shady dealings. You got the ability. Either way, beware of the greed that can make a millionaire unhappy. Patience and persistence will be what can make all this happen. Best wishes.

## In My Life

In my life, it's not going so well right now, like being incarcerated, not being able to be outside these barbwire fences. I just feel like my life is at the end but I know it's not. It's just at a pause for a little while, and hopefully it will be un-paused pretty soon so I can get out and get my life started and take care of my family.

I have a lot to look forward to, like a daughter growing up and living a happy and peaceful life with my future wife. That's why I pray day and night that the judge can really see that I'm not a bad person. You know it's not like I'm a repeat offender. This is only my second time being locked up and I'm really not a violent person.

Only if they can see that it's tearing me up inside. It hella hurts me not being able to be home with my daughter. I can't see how people can live their life being in and out of incarceration. Well that's it for right now. I love you, Maressa and Gabriella. Hopefully I'll be home soon.

**-Matt, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You are a lucky young man. We hope you will reunite with your family sooner than later too. Use this time as much as you can to start training your mind for any situation that can get you locked up again or make things worse. You have many responsibilities now. Start coming up with a Plan A, B and C and several support systems like certain family members, job training programs and other programs you may need. You don't have to do this alone and it will increase your chances of success.

**I have a lot to look forward to, like a daughter growing up and living a happy and peaceful life with my future wife.**

## Me Without You

I hate the world  
When you're mad at me  
Crazy without you  
'Cause you help me deal  
With my sanity  
You are my co-pilot  
My gas mask at a riot  
I love your body so much  
'Cause to me they're not your flaws  
'Cause I know me without you  
Is like cereal with no milk  
A spider without silk  
The leaning tower without the tilt  
Me without you  
Is like the Lakers without Shaq  
A Jill without Jack  
An ass without a crack  
Me without you is like Tony Montana without his sister  
Manolo without his lizard  
When it comes to lovin' you  
I'm gonna drop it like a wizard  
'Cause I just can't be without  
You hold me down till death  
Without you  
I get all types of pains  
Up in my chest  
'Cause without you  
Is not true love  
But with you  
It always feels like new love  
The kisses are all the same  
We still cuddle  
We still hug I love all my people  
Black, Spanish, Jews, and Arabs too  
But forget them and the world  
If there's a me without you

**-R-Bone, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Fun love poem and funny too! So are you talking about anyone in particular? How can you get out and stay out so you can have a relationship like this? This can all pass you by if you don't get your priorities straight. You probably heard it all before but when will it get through to you? Can you motivate yourself to further your education, stay off the streets and off of drugs and make it out there free and happy? Good luck!*

## In my world, there wouldn't be any guns or drugs

### In My World

In my world, I feel lost  
In my world, I feel hopeful  
In my world, there would be no more crime  
In my world, everyone believes in God  
In my world, life seems frozen when I'm incarcerated  
In my world, people won't die from starvation  
In my world, there wouldn't be any guns or drugs  
In my world, life would be completely different

**-Abbas, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Your world is very beautiful but you also include the reality of your sadness and isolation, and that is important to recognize too. You can make your ideals into reality by lending a helping hand to others one day, but first know that your world starts with you.*

## Only Half Of Me

You only fell in love with half of me  
The thug part of me  
The part of me that loves bein' on the block  
The part of me that loves sellin' them rocks  
The part of me that loves  
Stayin' out all night  
And loves getting' into them tough fights  
But what about the other half of me  
The part of me that you never see  
The part of me that cries 'cause my homies gettin' killed  
That's tired of all this blood gettin' spilt  
The part of me that's tired of  
Seein' all these young-ass ninjas on the block pretendin'  
they hard  
But they not  
The part of me that wants all this violence to stop  
But I can't 'cause I'm addicted to the block  
But like I said  
You don't know this part of me  
You only fell in love  
Wit' the thug part of me

**-Tyree B2, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: Who do you show this part of yourself? If no one sees it, how do you expect them to love it or understand it? Are you willing to show this side to your girl and see what she thinks, or are you afraid she won't love it or you? Would it be worth a try?*

## Love

What's love?  
Do I really love you?  
Do you really love me?  
If we love each other  
Why do we do the things we do?  
Why do we pretend this relationship will last forever?  
I don't trust you and you don't trust me  
How da hell is we supposed to have a family?  
Break up then make up, that's all we do  
I can't keep playin' these damn games wit' you  
We used to touch and rub and make love  
Now we scream and fight and touching you don't feel right  
Now when we touch it only bring back memories of the  
pain  
I don't think our love will ever be the same  
But after all we been through  
we still say we love each other so I have to ask  
Love  
What's love?

**-Tyree B2, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: This is a really interesting and mature love poem. Why do you think you two stay together if all of this is true? Are you afraid of hurting each other or taking a chance on loving someone new? What caused this relationship to take a wrong turn? Was it one specific incident or did things go bad bit by bit?*

## In The World I'd Like To See

In my world I see nobody struggling  
In my world I see no one starving  
In my world I see no guns only peace  
In my world there would be no suicides because  
Everyone in my world would be happy

**-Dak Mani B2, SF/YGC**

*From The Beat: Do you think the vision of your world can be achieved? What do you think it will take for the violence on the streets to stop? What can you do to make this dream more of a reality?*



## So Many Questions

What would people think  
If for some reason  
I jumped and fell to my death  
Off a balcony?  
What would people say  
If I jumped off  
The Golden Gate?  
Or if I shot myself  
In the face?  
What would people think  
If I hung myself  
From a redwood tree?  
What would people say  
If I died today?  
What am I supposed to do in life?  
Am I going to end up  
Living with mice?  
Tell me  
What am I destined to be  
What eventually will become of me?  
Will I be rich?  
Or will I be poor?  
Will I be married?  
Or will I be divorced?  
Am I going to see success  
Standing next to my wife  
In her wedding dress?  
Am I going to be a druggie  
Living on the streets  
Begging for money?  
How old will I be when I die?  
Who will be with me  
In my last moment of life?  
Tell me!  
I want to know  
Why must my future  
Remain inevitable?

**-Tim, Marin**

**From The Beat:** You ask the questions many teenagers seem plagued with, because you're realizing that your fate could go in any of an endless number of directions, and that knowledge can be really scary, especially when you're incarcerated and have little power over decisions in your young life. Of course, no one knows the answers, because no one can see into the future. The good news is that much of your future will be your choice. You can't know now what you'll want for your whole life, so can you take it one decision at a time? Do you want to finish high school? Go to college? Have a career? A family? Travel? Who can you go to for advice, so you can make a plan to achieve whatever seems valuable to you now? Great luck!

**"God, I told you  
I need a helping  
hand, and I just  
don't see you."**

## Mi Mundo No Sabía Nada De La Vida

Cuando era pequeño, mi mundo era la escuela, jugar, y también cuidar a los animales. Creo que en toda mi vida he causado muchos problemas.

Mi papá era una persona muy dura conmigo y yo era una persona que no sabía nada de la vida. Poco a poco me fui dando cuenta de la vida, y en realidad es muy difícil. Yo todavía soy un menor de edad y he conocido muchas cosas malas. En mi pasado hice bastantes cosas malas, y ahora estoy arrepentido.

Yo pienso que todo lo malo que uno hace, lo paga uno en la vida. Creo que todavía me falta por vivir, y quiero ahora tratar de hacer todo bien, y le pido a Dios que me ayude.

**From The Beat:** Siempre un arrepentimiento es recibido y perdonado ante Dios, siempre y cuando ese arrepentimiento es sincero y verdadero. Amigo, nos da muchísimo gusto que estes cambiando de pensar y que estes buscando la manera en como hacer tu vida. Estas en lo cierto, te falta mucho que vivir por lo cual deberias tener mucha precaución porque esto es sólo el comienzo. Escucha esto, sólo tú eres el dueño y el que decide que camino coger en la vida.

## In My World Did Not Know Anything About Life

When I was little, my world consisted of going to school, playing, and also taking care of animals. I believe that through my entire life, I've caused some troubles.

My father was very hard on me and I was a person that knew nothing about life. Little by little, I started realizing what life was all about, and in all reality, it's very difficult. I'm still a minor, but I've already come to know a lot of bad things. In my past, I did a lot of bad things, and I am remorseful about all my bad deeds.

I think that all the bad that a person does, that person, later on in life, pays for those bad deeds. I believe that I still have a lot more time in life, and from now on, I want to live my life trying to do good, and I ask God to help me.

**-Jose B2, SF/YGC**

## Days Go By

Days go by and I think I am still here in the world and when will it be my turn to go? Ninjas may think it's funny but they don't know that this shhh really goes on in my head. It's like sometimes I want to be dead. "God, I told you I need a helping hand, and I just don't see you." I wake up in this shhh hole everyday and it's like I'm never going to leave. Sometimes I think, "Why I wake up?" Some days it's like I want to just fly away from here.

I see the same ninjas everyday and we do that same thing every day. It never changes. I'm sick of these ninjas in here thinkin' they're bad and can't nobody mess with them and they're the ones that cry about everything. I've been in here sixty-eight days. Sixty-eight days of my life has gone by. Why? I still don't know but where can I go? The same faces everyday, the same food every week, and we never see any good looking girls. But that's what happens when days go by.

**-D, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Your writing is honest and we appreciate that. Many people lie to themselves and act hard but in actuality we all suffer in some way. You paint a bleak picture of hopelessness and apathy but there is something missing from your description of your situation. You don't answer your own question of why you are here? Looking at what happened before you were locked up can help you make sense of your situation. Also remembering that nothing is permanent can help and where there is darkness, there has to be light.

## I Believe

I believe  
In the stripes and the stars  
And that one day  
I will have  
A brand new car  
A Mustang Sally  
Is all I need  
Take it from me  
I will not be living  
In a state penitentiary  
I believe that if you can  
You can touch the sky  
I believe that a platypus was created  
When a duck  
Made love to a beaver  
And that Bush should be assassinated  
By a meat cleaver  
I believe it's a crime  
To not take part  
In America's pastime sport  
I believe everyone deserves  
A second chance  
And not to be put  
In a space that's cramped  
I believe that everyone  
Makes mistakes  
And that one point  
You will need God's help  
To choose your fate  
I believe in getting your GED  
And that everyone  
Should succeed  
I believe that I hate being on probation  
That's why I say  
Screw this juvenile justice system  
I believe Stojakovic  
Has the best shot from the three  
And that Martin Luther King  
Did have a dream!

**-Tim, Marin**

*From The Beat: Nice poem. Why do you believe in the stripes and the stars? Or about the possibility of being threatened by life in a penitentiary? Or about your belief that God can help guide your destiny? You can write about how you feel about what should happen to President Bush, but why you think he deserves the fate you'd wish on him? Why should anyone be assassinated with a meat cleaver?*

## Para Mi Mejor Amigo

No lo puedo creer que por primera vez no estes a mi lado listo y preparado, pero comprendo. Me encuentro encerrado recordando esos días que en el mall. Me acuerdo que ese día estábamos orgulloso y con sonrisas de caras de malillas.

Siempre estuvimos en las buenas y en las malas. Eres y serás mi firme camarada. En la batallas eres mi espada y en la calle eres la sombra. Chale perro así es el destino. No me puedo quejar más homies por tu ausencia. Eres mi mejor amigo. Mi carnalito, los recuerdos que dan en mi mente y en mi corazón.

*From The Beat: Que triste es perder a un amigo que uno tanto quiere. Amigo, tenemos que aceptar que estas son las consecuencias que trae andar en cosa malas. No nos tomes a mal pero nomas queremos que te des cuenta que si sigues en este rollo vas a terminal mal y lo que menos queremos y quieren tu familia es que llegues a termonar muy mal. Cuidate amigo y sentimos mucho tu pérdida.*

## To My Best Friend

I can't believe that for the first time in my life you're not by my side ready and prepared, but I understand. I find myself incarcerated, remembering those days when I would go to the mall. I remember that on that day, we were happy and had smiles on faces while looking bad. We were always together through the good and bad times.

You are and will be my tight comrade. In battles, you are my sword and in the streets, you're my shadow. Damn dog, that's how destiny is. I can't be complaining anymore, homie, about your absence. You are my best friend. My little brother, your memories stay in my mind and in my heart.

**-Chiquilin, 150 Crew**

## Wanting My Life Back

Well sometimes when I'm in my cell I be prayin' to God if I'm going to Heaven or Hell. I'm thinkin' to myself, why am I in this place?! In this place, it's for some other person that don't want to take care of their own responsibility. I just ask God to give me my life back. I know he hears me, but I don't think he'll answer my prayers right away, but if he don't answer, I guess that's my life, and I gotta do the time even though I didn't do the crime.

I'm looking at either seven in the Y or twenty-five years in the pen. I just hope they don't give me the time so I can get on the grind to get my paper stacked, and after that I just want my own family with a girl that really cares for me. As for my blood family, I don't think they care for me, they doing their own thing. That hurts me very much.

You know I'm following in the footsteps of my big brother, who today is doing good. He has a family, he's free, but a long time ago he was just like me, but even worse. As I sit in my cell I look back at my life, and see the things I've done wrong. I blame my lifestyle for being in here, but that's the life I choose to live, that's all.

**-Lil' Augie, 150 Crew**

*From The Beat: Wait, you don't want the time so you can get out on the grind? What kind of grind are you talking about here? You want to get out just to put your freedom at risk, we don't get it. You say your prayers aren't being answered but maybe now is the time to really look at what you need to be doing with yourself. You blame your lifestyle, and then say that's what you choose, why not choose something else? Your brother was doing crimes during a time with different laws, the laws are different now and you may not get any more chances. This is not only a warning but encouragement that you can make it legit and low key. We wish the best for you.*

**I'm thinkin' to myself,  
why am I in this  
place?! In this place,  
it's for some other  
person that don't want  
to take care of their  
own responsibility.**

## La Vida De Un Imigrante

Cuando sali de mi país, vine con la idea de trabajar y salir adelante, pero cuando me agarró la migra mis sueños se derrumbaron. Ahora me encuentro aqui en la Juvenile solo y sin saber como está mi familia. Solo espero la decisión del juez para poder saber si me quedo o si me regresan para mi país.

Por ahora, no se nada sobre cuando me sacaran y no tengo ninguna noticias. Siento que adentro de mi corazón espera la llegada del día que me saquen de aqui y yo poder llegar donde mi padre que no he visto por unos años.

Estar libre es lo que deseo. Pasé por tanto sufrimiento para poder llegar aqui y no quisiera volver a pasar la experiencia que tuve otra vez, la experiencia que odavia tengo adentro de mi corazón y dentro de mi mente. Es duro y no le deseo esto a nadie.

Aunque yo sé que la necesidad es tan grande venir a los EEUU a mucha gente. Sólo les deseo de corazón que puedan llegar a su destino.

La vida de un emigrante es muy dura. Eso te lo digo por experiencia.

**From The Beat:** No te preocupes que ellos no te harán daño, sea lo que sea que hagan contigo, nosotros deseamos de corazón que les vaya bien y que nunca vuelvan a volver a caer en cosas así como estas. Tengan mucho cuidado con las decisiones que toman, no tomen todo a la ligera. Todo tiene solución en esta vida, hay muchas cosas que todavia se puede hacer. Sólo mirate y ve que estas vivo, sano, salvo y con tus dos manos. Todavía tienes todo un mundo adelante. Sabemos que estar aqui es una gran necesidad para ti y todos pero hay que aceptar la realidad y la realidad es esta. Ahora hay que intentar otra cosa o algo diferente. Y toma todo con calma, recuerda este dicho, "después de la tormenta viene la calma."

## The Life Of An Immigrant

When I left my country, I left with the vision of coming to the US, getting myself a job, and bettering myself in life. But when I got caught by the INS Immigration and Naturalization Services), my dreams collapsed. Now I find myself in Juvenile alone and without the ability to know how my family is doing. I'm just in here waiting for the judge's decision so I can know whether I'm staying, or if I'm going to get deported back to my country.

As for now, I don't know anything about when I'm going to get released, and I haven't heard any news. I feel hope my heart about the day when I get released from here and will be able to go where my father is, whom I haven't seen for many years.

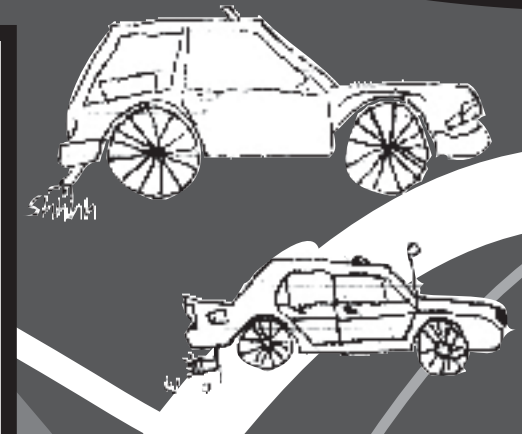
Being free is what I desire. I went through so much suffering just to be able to come to the US, and I would not like to go through that same experience all over again, the same experience that to this day I still carry in my heart and inside my mind. It's hard, and I do not wish this on anyone.

Even though I know that the need to come to the US is present in many people, I just wish with a passion that they would reach their destination.

The life of an immigrant is hard. I tell you this from experience.

-Rene, Marin

**The life of an immigrant  
is hard. I tell you this  
from experience.**



## Los Consejos Que Me Daría

Los consejos que me daría serían que cambiaran en esta vida porque la vida que llebo está mal. Gracias a Dios he cambiado y quiero ser alguien en est vida. Quiero salir adelante con mi nueva vida.

Yo les aconsejo a todos los jóvenes que andan en cosas malas que dejen de andar en lo malo y que busquen lo malo porque lo malo los llebarán a la prisiones.

Yo estoy preso porque hice algo que nunca debía haber hecho. Ahora le pido a Dios que me ayude y que me de fuerzas para seguir adelante. Estoy solo en este país, no tengo a mis padres porque estan en México.

Me han sentenciado a un años y lo malo es que después me van a deportar a México.

Lo que les pido a todos los que anden en drogas es que se salgan de las drogas porque son malas. Piensen en tener una familia y si no pueden solo, pidanle a Dios y él los escuchará y los ayudará a superar la drogadicción.

**From The Beat:** Esperamos que ellos sigan tus consejos porque la verdad que ese es el lugar donde ellos pasarán el resto de sus días si no se portan bien. Vayas a donde vayas te deseamos mucha suerte y porfavor ya no vuelvas a meterte en problemas. Recuerda que allá en tu país las cosas son más difíciles. Gracias pro tus palabras y mucha suerte. Que Dios te bendiga y te cuide, él te premiará por pasar su palabra.

## The Advice I'd Give Myself

The advice that I would give myself would be to change the way I'm living, because the life that I'm currently living is bad. Thanks to God, I've changed and I want to be someone in this life. I want to come out ahead in the new life I live.

I advise all the young people who are involved in bad things to stop being involved in bad things, and to stop seeking what's bad, because it will only lead them to prison.

I'm in jail because I did something that I should have never done. Now I ask God to help me and to give me the strength to come out ahead in life. I'm alone in this country. I don't have my parents because they're back in Mexico.

I've been sentenced to do time for a couple of years, and the messed up part is after I do my time, I'm going to get deported to Mexico.

What I ask from everyone who's involved in drugs is to get off them drugs because they are bad. Think about having a family, and if you can't do it by yourself, ask God and He'll hear y'all out and will help you overcome y'all's drug addiction.

-Cadrito, San Mateo



## En Mi Mundo Hay Destrucción

En mi mundo hay mucha droga y mucha destrucción.

Los miembros de las gangas se están matando sin razón. Toda tu familia se aparta de ti y prefieren estar sin ti.

Tus amigos te ayudan cuando les concierne, sin embargo en los problemas tuyos se apartan y te mienten dandote excusas y tú le crees como tonto sin saber que están mintiendo cuando realmente lo que estaban haciendo es esconderse.

Tu mamá es la única que siempre te soportó.

**From The Beat:** Es un gusto saber como te has dado cuenta que los homies no están contigo en las malas y como se inventan excusas para no ayudarte. Hay que enfrentar la realidad, y tu realidad es que no está bien el camino que llevas.

## In My World There's Destruction

In my world, there are a lot of drugs and lots of destruction.

Gang members are killing each other for no reason. Your whole family deserts you and they prefer to be without you.

Your friends help you when it concerns them, but when you're going through your problems, they lie to you, giving you excuses and you believe it like a fool without realizing that in reality they were just avoiding you.

Your mother is the only person who will support you.

**-Pastrulo, B1, SF/YGC**

## En Mi Mundo Ha Habido Un Cambio

En mi mundo, yo trabajaba para ganar dinero y ayudar a mi familia. Mi vida era feliz. Cuando yo nací, fue allí cuando conocí a mi mundo.

Cuando yo me vine para acá, vine a trabajar para ganar dinero y mandarle a mi familia, y el resultado fue que me agarraron. Ahorita estoy encerrado. No puedo ganar dinero para mandarle a mi familia y no poder ganarme la vida para salir adelante.

En mi vida, las cosas que están pasando ahorita como yo mismo.

**From The Beat:** Con calma, amigo sabemos que se te vino abajo todos tus sueños, pero sabes que no se te vino abajo, son las ganas de luchar y de salir adelante. Sabes, aunque hayas caído una vez o dos veces siempre tenemos la mano de Dios que estará ahí para levantarnos. Ten fe y verás que muy pronto algo bueno viene a tu vida. No te sientas mal, tus padres deben de estar orgullosos de ti por ser un muchacho bueno y no malo, que lo único que quizo fue hacer un cambio en sus vidas. ¡Arriba ánimo!

## A Change Has Taken Place In My World

In my world, I worked to earn money and help out my family. My life was happy. When I was born, that's where I came to know my world.

When I came over here, I came here to work so I could earn money so I could send some to my family back home, and the result was, I got apprehended. Right now, I am incarcerated. I can't earn money being in here so I could send some of it to my family back home, and also, being in here prevents me from becoming a winner in life so I can come out ahead in it.

**-Carlos, Marin**

## En Mi Mundo He Sufrido Mucho

En mi mundo, yo trabajaba y me la pasaba con mis padres. En mi mundo, yo he sufrido porque a veces trabajaba y a veces no. Yo sabía que tenía que trabajar para sostener a mi familia y ver sonreír a mis viejos.

Cuando emigré a este país, estuve feliz, pero cuando me atrapó la migra, me puse muy triste porque sé que todo mi esfuerzo se ha ido al Diablo. Pensé en mi familia y lloré. Le pido a Dios que no nos deporten a nuestro país. Después de mucho sufrimiento en el camino para poder trabajar y pagar mis deudas fue para nada porque ahora me encuentro aquí encerrado como un pajarito en una jaula.

Lo que me animaría y me haría feliz al igual que a mis padres es saber que no me van a deportar y que me van a dejar quedarme aquí.

Nadie puede imaginar lo que hemos sufrido en nuestro país. Vine aquí porque en nuestros países no hay trabajo, y mi familia tiene que comer. Por eso les aconsejo que sean Buenos muchachos y que respeten y valoren a sus padres.

**From The Beat:** Sabemos lo duro que debe ser para ti no poder ayudar a tu familia como lo pensabas que lo haría. Nos imaginamos que tus padres te bendicieron de piez a cabeza para poder estar con bien. Amigo, queremos que no te desanimes, que no te des por vencido y que la vida sigue. Lo bueno es que aunque sea tuviste la experiencia. En esta vida todo se puede, no te preocupes que todo es remediable, algo se te ocurrirá. Acuerdate que Dios sabe porque haces las cosas.

## In My World I've Suffered A Lot

In my world, I used to work and I would pass my time with my parents. In my world, I have suffered because at times, I would work, and sometimes I would not. I knew I had to work to support my family and see my parents smile.

When I immigrated to this country, I was happy, but when I got caught by INS, I got sad because I know all my effort and hard work has gone to hell. I thought about my family and I started to cry. I ask God for us to not get deported to our countries. It is not right that after going through a lot, and all the suffering during our journey to be able to work here and pay our debts, that I now find myself locked up in here like a bird in a cage.

What would cheer me up and make me happy, as well as my parents, is to know that I will not be getting deported and they are going to let me stay here.

No one can visualize what we have suffered in our countries. I came here because there are no jobs in my country, and my family has to eat. That's why I advise everyone that's locked up to be well-behaved and to respect and value our parents.

**-Manuel, Marin**

*I've Gotta Keep Trying*

What's good, fellow Beat Within writers? Much props once again to those who fill the pages. This is the poet 'Broken Glass' (aka Juju) coming through in another trying stage.

Two months ago my Uncle Beady (Leonard) passed away. He was in Potrero Hill and got his throat slit. They let me go home for the funeral, just to find out that the night before I got back my patna 'Ming Lee' got killed. I understand that since he was a hustla, that was a gamble he chose to take. They found him in the back of the store in Potrero Hill tied up, beaten, and shot numerous times in the head. I kept thinking, what if I was with him that night? What if I was dead. He was always hella dependable, whether you need help on rent or two-for-fifteen.

So my home pass was filled of funerals and tears. I went to the block and found his right hand man wearing Ming-Lee's jacket with the bullet holes in it, heartbroken but still out there grinding. The block never sleeps because money never stops. It's a trip no one even takes the time to slow they rolls to sit back and wonder why all of they homies are being taken out. They just wake up and strike to the block, get back on they paper chase. They might pour out a lil' Henny now and then, or tag your name on the side of the corner store where you grew up at, but that's it.

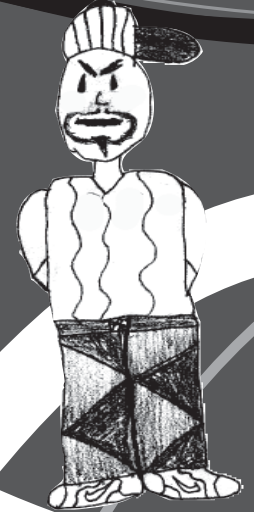
So much is going on in San Francisco lately. My people are dropping like flies, and there's nothing I can do about it. And then, the other day, I was reading The Beat Within and someone from YGC drew a picture saying rest in peace to a couple homies. I knew all of them, and I seen my homie's name — 'Joe Cheese' — me and him were so close. When I went on my home pass he promised me that when I touched down, he would smoke me out (before I start my righteous path). Now he's dead. I couldn't believe it. I felt like I had just seen him. But that's just the way it is; death grants no goodbyes, only heartbreaking memories of what once was.

It seems like every time I get up, I get knocked down. There's always something to try to bring me down. Sometimes I feel like giving up, saying it's too hard and letting this world strip me once again. I've been having those feelings lately, but I've gotta keep pushing; no matter who dies around me, I have to continue to live.

This one's dedicated to all who I will dedicate my success to, when it soon comes. Rest in peace, homies: Joe Cheese, Greedy, Ming Lee, Don-Cal-Hun, Uncle Beady, Armani, Julius, and many more . . .

**-Broken Glass, San Mateo**

**From The Beat:** The city (and the world) you're returning to is struggling right now. Your piece gives a face and a heart to the incredibly high murder rate in San Francisco — Uncle Beady, Joe Cheese, and Ming Lee are just three of almost forty murders that have taken place in the first five months of this year (unfortunately, by the time this gets published, the number may well be approaching fifty). The gravitational pull of life on the block, of the grind, is stronger every day — it's bringing more and more people down. That's why it's so heartening to read your pledge that no matter what happens around you, you have to continue to live. When you start to feel like giving up, where will you find your source of strength to keep on going? Is it possible that when you're at your lowest, the memory of those who couldn't be there with you will keep you going?

*Addiction*

It's in my blood  
It's overwhelming  
Kind of like a flood  
My dad  
My grandpa  
And now me  
Now I've caught the disease  
That disease  
Has now put my life on freeze  
All because I started smoking weed  
Cigarettes  
Marijuana  
Alcohol  
Now I'm in Juvenile Hall  
I never thought it would happen to me  
I thought that from addiction  
I would be free  
Free all my life  
Not leading a life of crime

**-Tim, Marin**

**From The Beat:** Drugs can threaten the strongest of us, Tim. Don't be surprised or ashamed that you became addicted. What do you think would help you best? Do you have access to a drug program? How are you doing inside, with no access to drugs? What, on the outs, compels, pleases you, makes you happy, that you might learn to revolve your life around? Sports? School? A job? Writing poetry? We're with you! Great luck!

and at the end of  
the day our mom  
would sing us  
to sleep.

*My Birthday*

When I was little I had my best birthday party. Me and my twin brother got a blow-up canoe and we played it a lot. I remember me and my stepdad, Jack, winning all the pool chicken fights and I got a big piñata and me and my twin busted it open and my mom gave us our favorite ice cream cake ever.

I wish I could do it all over again and I wish my step dad, Jack, did not die so he could be there, and at the end of the day our mom would sing us to sleep.

**-Jason, Marin**

**From The Beat:** Those are some nice memories to have. What is one of your most cherished memories with your step dad? What is your most cherished memory with your mom? Do you miss your mom singing you to sleep?

## *To Anthony Of 150 Crew*

You wrote a song called "I Knew I Should Have Left Her" about a girl who might be yo' baby momma. If she let you beat on the first day, do you think you were the only one? What kind of hope do you have in believin' what she says?

Maybe you're right, you should have let her walk by you without you holla'n at her. But you was the one to call her. If she gave in so fast, you know what you were getting into. You didn't stop to think what you were doing.

I'm not trying to come at you crazy, but think about it. That is a problem with a lot of us; we don't stop and think about what we are doing, we just do what our body tells us and forget what our mind is thinkin' and sayin'. If the baby is yours good luck with your fatherhood, and you're right to think, "What kind of mother would she be?"

**-Lil' Helpful, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** In your letter you mention that "we don't stop and think about what we are doing...". You make a good point. It's nice that there are people out there that care enough to give advice to help out folks before they get themselves into too much trouble. Do you think it is easy to take advice from others?

## *To My Boy*

What up? You chillin' in max, I be seein' you. I just wish it was like when we were in intake and had a chance to talk. It's cool though, 'cause we can write to each other and stay in touch, you feel me?

How are you doing in max? When they sent you over there I was like, that's messed up, on citas. When I look at you and see the way that you act, you don't need to be in max — it ain't you. I hope you doin' good over there.

I ask Ms. Bishop about you almost every day. She says you are doing good and it makes me feel a little better that you doin' cool. I hope I get a chance to talk to you and I will write you. 'Til then, stay strong and keep doin' you thang. Much love.

**-Lil' Helpful, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Lil' Helpful, how are you doing? You keep checkin' in with all of your folks. We want to know about you. How are you feeling? Are you staying strong? When things get tough, how do you cope?

## *To Pastor J-Wizzle Of 150 Crew*

What's up? You don't know me but I've been reading your writing to The Beat Within for some weeks now. I can see that you are changing to a smart and very open man by what you speak in your writings.

A couple of weeks ago you spoke of a time of meeting a girl and would speak of what you did with her. You also mentioned that you had a baby on the way. You said you be poppin' pills and havin' fun, aka actin' a fool (no offense).

I read your poem this week and you blew my mind. You have taken responsibility for your actions. I don't know you but I can see you are going to be a great father. I can see it. I have a two-year-old daughter and her father is nowhere around. I am 16 and doing it on my own. I know you don't know me, but promise me that you will be there for your child even if you and your girl don't make it. Don't leave the child to think what happened and think it was their fault.

From what I know, yo' girl is pregnant. Tell her I said good luck with her pregnancy and motherhood. It can be hard, but only a real woman can handle it. Good luck on yo' future family-to-be. Stay strong for you all, because without you they may not make it.

One more thing: poppin' pills can be fun, but I popped one with my best friend and she died. I'm not judging, but be careful — you don't want your child to be fatherless.

PS: I hope to meet you one day 'cause you seem to be a good person and I am a shake-a-hand-meet-a-friend kind of person.

**-Lil' Helpful, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Lil' Helpful, how did you acquire so much knowledge? You give advice with confidence, yet, caring and compassionate. How did you learn your lessons? Was there someone that helped you along the way? You sound like you've learned a lot through trial and error. We hope that your wisdom will help you make the right decisions to lead a peaceful and happy life.

## *Lil' Helpful's Page*

### *To Scooby Of 150 Crew*

Like always, I was reading The Beat Within and I read your poem, "15 Years Old". You had spoke of the fact that you had your girl pregnant and you were ready to bring forward a son. You are fifteen and ain't got no time for fun.

I just want to say that I had my baby at fourteen years old, and I am now sixteen years old and my daughter is two years old. I always said my childhood was over, but I found that I am growing with my daughter. We are both children and are learning together.

I may know more than her and have lived longer than she has. I can teach her what is right and wrong from my mistakes. You can also teach your child and have fun doing it.

Everyone says children shouldn't have children, but I know young people that do a better job of raising their kids than some adults. You will have a babysitter from time to time and you can go out. I can promise you that. I know how it is to not go out that night with your friends to that party and go stupid. Sorry to say, you have to be grown because your choice is to do grow folks' biz. You feel where I am coming from?

I know you don't know me and I'm not judging you. I'm just giving you some words from someone who's been there. Like I said, you don't know me but I am a caring person, and if you ever need anything and I have it, I will give it to you if you really need it. It can be anywhere from my time, money, or just need to talk. I will be there if you need a babysitter or just some help. It's nothin'.

How old is your baby's mother? If she needs to talk to someone who's been there at a young age, just let me know. Good luck on your fatherhood. Tell your BM that she may be young, but only a real woman can be a good mother.

**-Lil' Helpful, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Lil' Helpful, our knowledge is one of the nicest things we can share with someone. You sound like you really know what you are talking about. You have a really kind heart. Do you have someone in your life that gives you support and good

### *It's All Good*

I think today sucks. I have room time and The Beat Within is here, but that won't stop me from writing and get out what I have to say.

I look forward to Tuesday when The Beat Within comes 'cause it gives me a chance to write down what's on my mind. Sometimes reading The Beat Within has me want to tell people what I think of their writing, and I think that everyone does a good job on their writings and is going to make it far with them.

I have room time but it's all good 'cause I still spoke my mind on paper. To all, keep your head up and stay strong. One love.

**-Lil' Helpful, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Writing is really good therapy. It's one of the best ways to get out your frustration. We are really glad that reading The Beat gives you inspiration to write to others. Tell us, why does today suck? What makes a good day for you, and what makes a bad day? Keep writing.



## Tishay's Page

### *Too Beautiful For Words*

after all talk took  
that girl is ready  
for actions  
you ain't heard  
talk is too hurtful  
to just hear  
she's too beautiful  
for words  
she's been livin'  
with speakin'  
from all who said  
they ever loved  
then it came down  
to nothing  
that's why  
she's too beautiful  
for words  
the way she grew up  
listening and wishing  
for things to come true  
hitting curves  
another reason why  
she is too beautiful  
for words  
all the times  
she's givin' for theirs  
but never receive hers  
again she's  
too beautiful  
for words  
chatter is too loose  
like birds  
it comes from anywhere  
that's why  
she's too beautiful

for words  
can you hear  
too beautiful  
for words  
too beautiful  
for words  
words are what  
she fears  
making decisions  
communicating  
with endings  
never started  
from the beginning  
too beautiful  
for words  
do you want me  
to finish  
needing to touch  
and having to see  
she's too beautiful  
for words  
let her be  
for words can be  
powerful  
manipulating  
and soft as furs  
but this girl  
she is just too  
beautiful for words  
too beautiful for words

**-Tishay, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** No longer will you play a fool when words are used as tools of deceit. Promises are easy but hard to keep. Lying words, will make a broken heart bleed and sad eyes weep. But if you're hip to the game, you know where to lay the blame. Too beautiful for ugly deeds cloaked in words of wooing — for love's proof, is all in the doing!

### *Part Of Life*

just as things come easy  
they're just as easy to pass by  
so why say you can't  
when you never even tried  
loosen your grip  
and stop holdin' so tight  
sometimes you just gotta let go of certain things  
movin' on during life  
one two three even four or more  
things you've had on your shoulders for some time  
in life you tend not to want them anymore  
you grow older and your patience gets longer  
so your maturity gets you mentally stronger  
and your perspective on life changes  
so you start to rearranging  
you dress differently and your appearances ages  
but who you really are on the inside never faded  
i'm just saying try new things  
it could make you but never break you  
it will never hold you back  
just move you forward for right  
take risks that's what chances are for  
it's a part of life

**-Tishay, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We see your willingness to risk, to try something new, a new way of living and new ways to do what you need to see through to completion. For at the end of the road: safety, success, prosperity and freedom await you. We're not saying become a fake you, but the real you at last (beyond dead ends of the past) — 'cause you've always been willing to take a chance.

**stop holdin' so tight  
sometimes you just gotta let  
go of certain things**

### *You Can Make It*

(a letter to myself)  
your life is not over  
so don't give up  
this time is going to pass  
but i'm still wishin' you luck  
do what you have to do  
'cause right now you  
don't have no choice  
just hang in here  
i know you're tired  
i can hear it  
in your voice  
i get it  
times are hard  
but you've been strong  
you made it this far  
so continue to pray  
and continue to have faith  
no matter what they say  
you can make it tishay

**-Tishay, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You will make it, Tishay. Despite the pain you're facing, we see the progress you're making — the progress you've made! Yes, keep faith in yourself, Tishay!



## Time's Up, Part I

You jump out of line  
You run out of time  
Suddenly your life is like a fragment of your  
imagination  
No longer a source of your motivation  
If you can't take the heat  
Don't let them lift the sheet  
Tryna identify bodies in the middle of the street  
Could it really be your best friend?  
The friend you was just with two hours ago  
At a party going dumb  
Thought y'all was having fun  
When a stranger decides to pull a gun . . .  
(to be continued)

-Young Dooby, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** There are times in our lives where we don't know what is going to happen next. These experiences remind us how precious life is. It is time like this when we experience the loss of a life that we need to reflect on our own life. How's yours?

**hope that one  
day we will stop  
making money for  
the people that is  
pimping us.**

## Until That Day

Until that day when I go back home,  
I will be force to stay at this place and have to  
wait in line to use the collect phone.  
Until that day when I go back home,  
I will be in here around thirty-eight ninjas  
doing hella stupid stuff,  
getting us sent up 'cause they act like fools.  
Until that day when I go home,  
I will be in county blues listenin' to the staff  
trying to enforce these county rules.  
Until that day when I go home,  
I will be layin' in bed with no one to comfort  
me and hold my hand.  
Until the day I go home,  
I will be missing my family, and all the good  
shhh, miss seeing my potnas.  
Until the day I go home,  
I will continue writing to the Beat.

-T-Maine, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** T-Maine, tell us about that day, what will that day be like? Are you preparing for it? What do you miss most? What is all the good shhh? Life is screwed up in the Hall, no one is living the life they want inside these walls. What is the life you want? What do you want your life to be like on the outs? Will it happen?

## T-Maine And Young Dooby's Page

### I Woke Up This Morning . . .

I woke up this morning and said, "Damn, I'm still here"  
While you out bangin'  
You have to live a life of fear  
Where will that bullet come from next?  
Duckin' and runnin', will you have time to stop and rest?  
Hittin' that blunt may sound and look good  
But would you like your child to do the same?  
I don't think you would  
You and ya boys think you havin' fun runnin' that ripper  
Three weeks later go to the doctor  
Bet you wish you had skipped her  
Go ahead, pop that pill  
Bet you'll be running around thinkin' we havin' a fire drill  
When you finally decide to drop  
Who gon' call the cops?  
You've been alone and zonin' for 48 hours  
And you really need to take a shower  
Oh, you havin' fun now  
Five shots of Incredible Hulk  
Ninja, you can't even walk  
Now you gon' try to drive  
Ninja, you 'bout to take some lives  
But you continue to drink  
'Till your car spin  
You think, "Damn . . ."  
(to be continued)

-Young Dooby, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** You continue to take us on these journeys. Unfortunately these situations are very common. Your writing skills are getting better and better. What do you make of all these scenarios? Why do people continue to make irresponsible decisions?

## Hoing For The System

Man why is it that we make money for these people that don't give a shhh about us. They are like our pimps, they put us on EM or send us to a group homes. They know none of us will complete none of that stuff.

The ones that do complete something, do something even more stupid, to come right back here to the Hall (aka the track). I mean just sit down and look at it, the system do the same thing that pimps do. They give us a place to rest our head, they give us food. It is not what we want to eat, but you don't want to stray. They give us a time limit to do shhh and have it done. If you look at it, a pimp will tell his hoe to stay on the track for how ever long he want his hoe to. I just hope that one day we will stop making money for the people that is pimping us.

-T-Maine, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** This is an interesting comparison you are making. Do you think someone in the System faces the same challenges as a prostitute leaving their pimp? Are you going to be able to get out of the system, once you are out of the Hall? What advice would you give a prostitute that wants to get out of the game?

**Until that day when I go home,  
I will be layin' in bed with no one  
to comfort me and hold my hand.**

## Lil' Youngin's Page

### I'm Tired

I'm tired of that petty senseless violence going on in my streets — the lifestyle of murder and destruction is tiring and I still haven't got no sleep.

I never thought it would get to this seeing my potnas murdered by the dozens, friends, people I know, my family, cousins, most of them dead in small caskets — questions go in and out my head as if all I can hear — why is there so much violence? Why is there so many youngstas dying? And why does it seem like no one cares?

It seems like we're living in a tribal village war and the western world won't send help for our health. The blood on my block's street still can't be removed. The sidewalk is still bloody with fury. I'm tired of going inside the mortuary and sitting in funeral homes. No more crossing that line no more. I've been through it; failure cannot be a option. I lack and need a good safe good night's sleep without havin' to have a gun under my pillow or with one eye open 'cause you always gotta worry about payback.

I'm trying to take lemons and make lemonade, it's time to make a different set of goals, 'cause it's not pretty when the tables turn and that dude you roughed up or shot comes back after all them years and it's all bad. There is still time; death can't be a option for me. The streets is death row and some are just waiting in line.

**-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Living with paranoia is probably not the best lifestyle. Sometimes when we read your stuff, we wonder, are you being real to yourself? What do you really wanna do, 'cause it sounds like you're runnin' game more than tryna change. What are some of your plans for when you are released?

### I Was Told

I was told, it's time for me to find out and know what I wanna do with my life. I was told I'm at that age and period in my life where I'm going to be making my own decisions. I was told by my father that I don't wanna go through what he been through, the roads are all bumpy — prison, jail all the hard times, but don't get me wrong there were some good times that probably followed up with the bad times.

I was told to never doubt yourself 'cause some people that didn't have nothing — no roof over their heads, sleepin' on floors, or cars became millionaires, like they say from rags to riches. I was told you might fall down but get back up and give up that fight. Just don't quit even if you get to the borderline of hard times where can't nothing else go wrong.

I was told ask and you will receive, and closed mouths don't get fed, but what happens when you talk too much? I never got to ask that. I was told the streets eat you up; they're troublesome. Day by day goes by and I'm told not to trip, but I could be here a hundred days and I still wouldn't get used to waking up every morning doing the same thing every day.

This is not a place you grow to love or grow to need, this is not home. There is no love all you hear is keys and that's what I was told.

**-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Do you listen to what you're being told or do you just hear it? What kind of life lessons do you live by? What kind of your own wisdom could you pass down to a younger generation? 'Cause you have to think for yourself sooner or later.

### I Wanna Cry

When am I satisfied when I get that money in my hand, man I wanna cry, am I shedding tattoo tears or do I wanna shed tears from my heart? All the pain and hurt bundled up from misery. I wanna cry 'cause some of my potnas and cousins will sleep in a casket for eternity, knowing now that they're like ghosts in the dark. I had to bury my potna that I hold close to my heart, living in this world that's so cold. That could only give a person so much heartache and pain until it feels like there's no more tomorrow no going on.

It always feels like a black cloud is trailing just following me and it's always rainy days. Even though it's dry outside with no sunshine — it's just bitterness and dark. I wanna cry because it's like everywhere I go, it feels like trouble is not too far — it's walking or running right on side of me. It's to the point where so many bad things done happen to me where it feels like nothin' good can happen.

I wanna cry 'cause I took the hard way out, it's like I passed up most of the good times for the bad times. It's like okay, I made a mistake and that's as far as this could go. I'm not trying to make any more trips to the morgue. I hate the smell of embalming fluid. I don't need or want a "certificate of death," it's time for a legal hustle — nobody's untouchable. I wanna cry.

**-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Why don't you just cry? There ain't nothing wrong with crying and anybody who told you that it makes you less of a man lied. It's human nature to feel sad and have deep emotions. What kind of legit hustle do you want to take on? What are you willing to give or give up in order to gain and maintain your freedom and life?

### Together

Staring at the tinted complexion

Of perfection

Submission to flesh

Sweatin' whimpers in text

It's flashing in and out of reality unwind in fantasy

A matrix of you warped in a zone of my hand and me

Slow dance with me we can do this romantically

I want to leave impressions on your walls that no man can leave

From the top of your head where the extensions blend

Your jet black eyes encompassed with mascara

Your Egyptian cheekbones and west African lips

Your shoulders, your cleavage, your cocoa arms

Your back, your smell, and superb waist

The outwards slope of your hips protruding

Your curves your waist your shape

Your thighs, your legs, even your beautiful feet

The exotic look in your eyes when you're undoing your string

How the baby oil glows on your skin like black chocolate or leather

Bless your mom for bringing us together

**-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You seem to like this woman from the outside, but does she got it going on both upstairs and downstairs? Are you objectifying her body and shape? What about how she feels when she's undressing herself for you? Do you ever think about that?



## Young Fatz's Page

### Love Is Thicker Than Blood

Some people say "blood is thicker than water," but I think love is thicker than blood 'cause family can turn on you just like others can. Maybe even quicker. Whether it's in a good or bad situation.

Real loved ones gon' stay by your side no matter what the situation may be. I say good or bad because in a good situation, they'll smile in your face but wish dat they was in your place. And in a bad situation they'll stick by you no matter what.

So when you're in a bad situation that's when you find out your friends from pretenders. But still, no one can be trusted.

**-Young Fatz B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We just can't agree that no one can be trusted because we know people we've trusted all our lives and they've never let us down. Not many, but some. At the same time, we do agree with you that just because someone is your "family" doesn't mean that they can't be two-faced and grimy. They can! In the end, we can all define our "family" the way we choose to, and that may include blood relatives and it may not.

### My life

Throughout my life, I was basically brought up to the game. Pops was in da game, and uncles, cousins, etc. So basically da game is just in me. I never really thought that I was going to enter until my life came to a drastic change.

It was February 20, 2001, when I got a call saying dat my pops had passed away. I was in Sac when they called me. At first I didn't believe it, but then my mom called me and told me.

When I got here to San Francisco, I seen hella people standing in front of my house, so then I started to believe it. At that point I didn't care 'bout no one but my mom. I went lookin' for her and found her in the house. I sat there wit' her for a minute and just hugged her tight.

Then after dat, I went out and started drinkin'. And I don't even drink. That's when I knew I had to step up my game to help support my family. That's when I entered da game and started hustlin'. Naw, I had been hustlin', but dat's when I really started stackin' my dippahs, ya know! Stopped spendin' my money on stupid stuff. Cut down habits and all dat.

I kept givin' my mom money every other day just so she could have bread in her pockets. Even though she really didn't need it, but it was just out of love.

But now I'm locked up and can't really do much to help out my big brah and them, but I'll be out in a minute to get back to doin' what I gotta do. Until then, I'm finsta hold mines and make da best out of a bad situation. So stay up and one love.

**-Young Fatz B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** This is another of the many tragic stories we read about youngsters forced to act like adult men way too early. We don't know what we would have done in your shoes, Young Fatz, but we see a real dilemma for you (and for all those who hustle to put food on their momma's table), which is that the very hustle puts you in jeopardy of losing your freedom, and thus losing your ability to help! That's the situation you find yourself in now — and it's the situation you contemplate returning to ("...to get back to doin' what I gotta do.") If your family can get their bread while you're locked up, then why do you have to return to the game to help them when you get out?

### Me, My Son And I

When I get out, I plan on spending time with my young one for a long time. My baby momma could come if she want to, but I ain't gonna beg her if she don't wanna come.

I do plan on movin' out the city to the boondocks or somewhere in the cuts just to slow down for the best of my son. I'm gonna try to do all I can just so my son can have everything dat I ain't had and more. I'm also going to provide for him so he won't have to think about hustlin', 'cause I don't want my son to be caught up in the street life.

But he will be street smart and book smart to help him get through life just a little easier, 'cause I think, in order to get through life, you have to be smart both ways. Just in case you don't make it through school the streets can always support you some way.

That's all I got to say.

**-Young Fatz B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** We applaud your decision to slow down for the sake of your son. What are you hoping to do to put food on the table? What will you tell your son, and what will you show your son, to keep him from following in your footsteps? If your baby's momma doesn't want to follow you, how will you get your son?

### Sprung Dummy

I don't see why people in here be talking 'bout they wifeys, knowin' dat she's on the outs "Runnin Wild" with da next person. I ain't sayin' that you can't love her, but speaking highly on her life like she's innocent just ain't right, 'cause females is grimy just like males is. The only thang different is they can lie even better than males.

Males always get caught up in at least one lie 'cause a female will be quick to investigate. That's only if she really loves you. But females could sit in front of your face and cry all damn day tryin' to prove she's innocent, knowin dat she's a "Run Wild" freak. And a sprung dummy just gon' fall for it and fall back in love with her.

That the part I don't get 'bout ninja's these days, knowin' that you ain't the only one but still call her your wifey when you know for a fact that she's jiggy. So while she's your wifey, she's also the next ninja's bed friend. And that's what I call a sprung dummy.

**-Young Fatz B5, SF/YGC**

**From The Beat:** Is your opinion about sprung dummies based on your own experience? If so, we're sorry. But we also think you're right for the most part. Y'all and y'all's girlfriends (and wifeys) are adolescents, and major hormones are helping to direct your thoughts and deeds. And that's true whether you're a boy or a girl, so it's foolish to expect that your girlfriends will remain pure and true to you while you sit locked up in a cell. The only solution is to get out and stay out!

**Males always get caught up in at least one lie 'cause a female will be quick to investigate.**

## Peanut's Page

### *From Disrespect to Being Good Friends*

I met this girl named Rosa. She was this hella fine girl, but I didn't really know her.

She was looking hella good, but my true friends told me hella bad things about her. I didn't really care what my friends said about her. I liked her, in a way, but I wasn't sure if she liked me to the point where me and her would go out.

A couple of months passed, and I found out she used to hella like me. So I was like, "Whatever, I'll go see what's up!" Next thing I know, this other guy comes along and asks her out, too. So I'm like, man!

She ended up picking the other guy, so I guess I got kinda jealous. I said to myself, "Man, this girl ain't nothing!" And I started disrespecting her and things, doing her hella scandalous.

Next thing I know, I'm in jail for two months in the Hall. Then I get sent to Camp Sweeney. And on one of my home visits, I was driving with my dad when I saw Rosa and her friend, walking.

So we pulled over, and I yell out, "Rosa!" And she comes running, hella excited! She gave me a hug, and we were talking for a while. Then she told me to call her that night. This really got me thinking, "I've done her dirty so many times, and she still wants to talk to me!" I didn't think she even would want to talk to me.

So I call her that night, and we talk about how it's been hella long since we seen each other; and how she hella misses me; and how the class we used to have together is boring without me there. I was shocked at what she was saying! And I felt hella bad for the things I'd done to her in the past.

Now I'm in Camp, and she writes me every week. I write her, too. I found out that she's really a nice person once you get to know her. I went from disrespecting her, to her being one of the people I trust and care about!

**-Peanut, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You're very fortunate to have found Rosa at all, let alone after your behavior. Still, you have the courage and honesty to see what you did and why. Everyone makes mistakes, but if you learn from your mistakes, they become a blessing rather than a curse — in your case, a blessing two-fold 'cause you got the girl and the lesson both! Now if you can avoid repeating some of the other mistakes in your past, like the ones that brought you here, it will be all good — for the both of you.

### *Friends*

Friends, people you can trust to always be there for you. We all have friends, and we also have people we call friends who really aren't friends at all.

You may say he or she is your friend, but when you get in trouble — where do your "friends" go? If you're locked up or in trouble, that's when you find out who your real friends are. That's how I found out who my friends are.

Once I got locked up, half of the people I called friends, weren't even there for me. They vanished and pretended that they didn't know, or they made up the dumbest excuses. Now I know who my real friends are — do you?

**-Peanut, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Another useful way to distinguish a real friend from a fake, is that familiar saying: "A friend will never lead you into danger." And danger, of course, includes jeopardizing your freedom; the preciousness of which you now fully understand.

### *To The Beat Within*

Yo! What's up Beat? I thought I would just give y'all my appreciation for what y'all doing for us up in the system. I really appreciate y'all for coming every week to have us write pieces.

The benefit to me of y'all coming every week, is that I can release my stress by writing just a couple of sentences. (And I like to see my writing in The Beat, especially when I have my own page!) When y'all come through, it gives us a chance to express our feelings, to write about our mistakes, our family, our friends and the things we've been through in life.

Another reason why I appreciate y'all, is because there are a lot of us in the system, and I know we write a lot in The Beat — and y'all got to type all that shhh up! That's a lot of typing, and I appreciate y'all for that!

Keep doing what y'all doing, 'cause what would it be without y'all? This is Peanut from Camp. Thank you, Beat Within. Peace out.

**-Peanut, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You may actually be the first Beat writer to have pointed out just how much typing goes into a single issue of The Beat Within! We know you're filling out a job application, and if you do come down to the office — we'll probably set you to typing some of this weekly mountain of words yourself (plus writing a few of your own)! Much love and respect.

### *Time Going By Faster*

Man, time is going by hella fast for me in Camp. I remember the first time I got to Camp. I thought I was never going home. At first, I had to wait till Saturday to go home and come back Sunday.

Screw the twenty-four hour pass — I'm doing it good up in Camp! It'll be my third month here in Camp, and I'm already on student council. Now that I'm on student council, I get to go home on Wednesdays and come back Thursday morning; and I also get to go home Fridays and come back Mondays!

My time here is just going by fast. Next thing I know, I'll be getting out! I'm never really at Camp, 'cause most of the time I'll be on an outing with the volleyball team or on an outing with Cornerstone.

Now I ain't got nothing to worry about. All I gotta do is keep doing what I'm doing in Camp — and I'll be out in no time!

**-Peanut, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You figured out the well-kept secret: The more you do and the better you do at Camp, the faster the time goes! And the more time away from Camp you get. You are definitely doing it right! Keep up the good work. Props!

**All I gotta do is keep  
doing what I'm doing  
in Camp — and I'll be  
out in no time!**

## Memories That Haunt Forever

Memories, we all have memories of the past. I have memories that will haunt me forever. What I mean by haunt, is that it will always be there even though I don't want it to be. Memories are things you can't erase from your head; they just stay there.

Well, I want to share some memories that haunt me. This was long ago in the Philippines. I was eleven years old, spending a two-week vacation in the Philippines. I met some of my cousins there, and we always hung out.

One day me and my cousin was walking to a fishing lake to go fish. We passed by a lot of straw houses. While we were passing the straw houses, my cousin was flicking matches — and one got on the roof! Next thing we know, the house is on fire!

I was too little to know what to do, so I ran until me and my cousin were out of sight. That is one of the memories that will stay with me forever.

Another one of my memories, is when I almost drowned. It was the end of the tenth-grade year, and me and my friends decided to go swimming. Now I didn't know how to swim, so I stayed in the four-feet deep part of the pool while everyone else was in the twelve-feet part.

I got out and circled around the outside of the pool to get closer to my friends. As I was standing there talking to my friends, I didn't notice that one of them had gotten out of the water and walked around behind me. And he pushed me in!

I remember gasping for air and going crazy in the water! I finally grabbed onto the pool ladder and pulled myself out. My friends thought I had been kidding about me not knowing how to swim. So then they taught me how to tread water and how to swim.

Memories can be good and bad. Some memories are funny and cherishable; they're good. But some are bad because we may not want to remember bad things that happen in life. If I had the chance to take one memory out of my head, it would be the day I saw my grandmother have a heart attack.

I was just about to go to school when my grandmother stopped me to give me money. I sat next to her, and all of a sudden — it happened. I panicked and didn't know what to do! I ran into the house and called my aunt and uncle who were home.

I tried to tell them what had just happened, but I couldn't get it out of my mouth! Finally, my aunt understood me and ran outside. My uncle called some people who lived next door to us, because they were doctors.

That was the scariest moment in my life. My grandmother survived, but the memory still haunts me.

**-Peanut, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** What all three memories seem to have in common, is your terror and panic — your deep and sudden fear — along with an overwhelming sense of helplessness. Yet there is an intimate connection to other human beings in each story as well (for each memory in your telling of it becomes a story). Is this what etches them even more deeply into your memory and into your reader's imagination? They are haunting memories. They are terrible and moving stories, yet wonderful, too; because they so fully engage your reader's heart and imagination!

## My Turn To Ask The Beat Some Questions

I've noticed that y'all always asking us questions, but we never ask y'all. So I'm'a ask some questions.

- 1) When did The Beat begin?
- 2) Is The Beat Within only in California?
- 3) How many people work for The Beat?
- 4) Who is in charge of The Beat? (Much props to whoever is!)
- 5) Where is The Beat's office?
- 6) Is your job voluntary or is it a real job?
- 7) Do y'all like doing what y'all do?
- 8) Who types all the pieces?
- 9) What benefits do y'all get from your job?
- 10) Last but not least: Are y'all going to answer my questions?

**-Peanut, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** (1) First issue in 1996, after assassination of Tupac Shakur. (2) No, see bottom of page 3 in any issue for listing of workshop sites. (3) 34 editors and staff; see p. 3. (4) David Inocencio (much props!). (5) 275 Ninth St. (third floor), San Francisco (downtown); see p. 3 or any topic sheet. (6) Paid, some volunteers. (7) Yes. (8) Mainly ex-detainees; but your weekly facilitator types yours. (9) Salaried staff get medical/dental. (10) Funny you should ask.

## Peanut's Page

### Apology

If there is an apology I owe, it's to my mom. I put my mom in pain and suffering because of the choices I've made in my life up till now.

My mom is always there for me, no matter what the situation is. She talks to me about changing my life and doing better in school, and I always tell her that I will change. Although I say it, it doesn't mean I'm'a do it!

I mean, I want to change my life around, but it's hard. Moms is always lecturing me and telling me what's right and what not to do. It's almost like she wants to run my life for me! But I understand why my mom does those things — she's just doing her job as a good mom.

I love my mom, and I owe her a big apology. I hope I can make it up to her in the future.

**-Peanut, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** No teenager wants his mother running his life, but you must be able to see now where she's right and where she's wrong when she worries about you. It's time to let your actions make your apologies instead of your words. Okay, it's hard. But so are you! Just do it.

## Almost, But No

Me and some patnas was chillin' after school when we saw the janitor of the school with the master keys on top of his cart.

We followed the janitor inside the school hallways, waiting for him to leave his cart unattended. Just when me and my patnas was gettin' ready to give up, I saw the janitor go into a room — and I instantly go get the keys and break for the door!

Next night, me and one of my patnas, go to the school with the key. We went into hella classrooms, taking hella money from the store and from teachers' desks. Me and him, had like two hundred and fifty dollars each.

Then me and my patna decided to hit the safe in this one classroom. We went in and looked around. We went into this big ol' closet with hella ceramic clay, drawers, paintings, clay projects, and — the safe!

As we were trying to open the safe, the lights in the room came on — and someone walked in! It was the janitor. He went into the closet where we were, but he didn't turn on the light for the closet; so he didn't see us!

We were trying to be as quiet as possible. But when my friend was trying to put the keys in his pocket, he missed his pocket — and the keys fell on the floor, making hella noise! Me and my patna broke out laughing, so the janitor came back into the closet and was trying to look for us.

I told my patna that on the count of three, we would run for it! We count to three, and I broke on the janitor. But my patna wasn't that lucky. My patna slipped on some powder clay, and the janitor jumped him!

I was all the way at the gate when I looked back and saw the janitor on my patna's back. My patna swung at the janitor, and the janitor fell off him and landed on his knee. Then my patna ran and caught up with me.

As we were walking, we were talking 'bout how we almost got caught. The next day, we saw the same janitor limping down the hallway.

**-Peanut, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** You're a terrific story teller; and (aesthetically speaking) the ending of your story is perfect. But in The Beat we're at least as interested in the story teller as we are in any story he/she has to tell or how well it's told. So, tell us something about you. Were you laughing when you saw the janitor limping, like you laughed when patna dropped the keys? And even more crucial to our understanding of you, the storyteller, are you laughing now? Or, if you were laughing then but not now, what's changed? If you're still laughing, what hasn't changed that maybe needs to — if you want to stay free, too.



## Lil' Kev's Page

### Coming Up

here it comes  
that final day  
released from camp  
i can't wait  
no more dirty urine test  
no more negative write-up  
no more county food  
and no more county blues  
i wish i could sleep it off  
but i know it will be on my mind  
july second of two thousand and four  
that's not a long time  
man i'm juiced  
finally let loose  
man i have a whole lot to do  
i have a child on the way  
so i really can't play  
but i ain't tripping  
i will handle my business  
and my day will be coming up

-Lil' Kev, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** No more dirties starting now! You don't have to wait till you get out to say goodbye to dirty tests. And you've earned your freedom twice over, but that doesn't mean you can't be sober after you're free. Your child would love to have a daddy sober and clean! With a clear mind, you'll handle your business on time, yanawmean! (Just make sure it's not still in the street.)

### Makin' It

i'll make it  
i know i will survive  
i strive everyday  
so i don't go the wrong way  
when i do go wrong  
i still try my best  
when they write me up  
i know it's only a test  
to see how i'll react  
that's why i chill  
and just lay back  
i started what i'm into  
and i'll finish what i'm in  
and i know i'm all alone  
but fa'show i'll make it

-Lil' Kev, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** You've made believers of your readers! And thanks for sharing this hard-earned wisdom that goes beyond everyday vision! It comes from experience wedded with desire, the ability to chill when they try to light your fire. Thanks for lifting us a level higher!

### Hopeless

at times i feel hopeless  
stressed out mind gone  
and all blown up  
body rocked brain dropping  
man i'm hopeless  
i say fuhgit  
and thug it out  
no mom no pops  
i'm left to wild out  
they wanna lock me up  
and throw away the key  
but i won't let 'em  
'cause they can't see me  
they got me now  
but not for long  
one day i'll be gone  
whether i'm dead or released  
i won't be here  
but the readers will remember me  
lil' kev who took them deep  
man i'm hopeless and angry  
feel like crying  
but i can't let it show  
but you know i will  
when i get to my room  
i will cry all the way to sleep  
and then i'll think  
what did i do to myself  
to feel so hopeless

-Lil' Kev, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Why so hopeless? Well, how 'bout: "no mom no pops" — that's a lot of pain for a young man to carry on top. And then, as you say, you went wild and they're making you pay. But here's what makes you a man above the rest: you survive despair and claim your self-respect, not by wilding out like yesterday, but crying in your sleep — then rising to face the new day in a new way, by showing so much self-control and confidence that even you wonder where the darkness went! Now you have a family of your own just around the bend. And you grew up just in time, young friend. Lil' Kev is a big man!

## Things still ugly: ninjas dying left and right!

### A Dialogue Between Lil' Kev and Jermil

[K = Lil' Kev; J = Jermil]

K — What's up, big bra? How you doing?  
J — Man, I'm chilling, trying to survive.  
K — Man, are you cool? Do you need any loot?  
J — No, I'm cool. But I could go for a box.  
K — Don't trip! You know I got you.  
J — How's everything going out there?  
K — Things still ugly: ninjas dying left and right!  
J — You better be cool out there, lil' bra.  
K — Man, I am. You know I got a kid on the way.  
J — For real? By who?  
K — Her name, Pixie, and I think she's the one!  
J — Are you sure, lil' bra?  
K — Man, I'm positive like a AIDS test!  
J — Well, I guess so.  
K — Bra, I got to go, but I'll be sending that box. Call me later, 'cause I got a friend, a girl, I want you to meet.  
J — She better not be ugly with messed-up feet!  
K — All right, bra, be safe, and I love you.  
J — I love you, too. And I'll call you back.

-Lil' Kev, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** We can feel the warmth of affection between the two of you even in this short conversation: the way Jermil warns little brother to "be cool out there"; and the way Kev confides his love for Pixie. But we also just want to say, it's possible to share love without sharing drugs, okay? Thanks for giving us a peep into brotherly love in common speech.

### Why

why do we do  
what we do  
when we do it  
no one knows  
i don't know  
do you know  
will anybody know  
i hope so  
'cause we are  
messing up our futures  
which have not yet begun  
i don't know why  
i always told lies  
i don't know why  
my brother had to die  
but i know one thing  
i'll find out  
why

-Lil' Kev, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** Maybe there was a time in your life, lies were what you needed to survive. But then they swallowed you up alive. And now you've come out the other side! No one can say why Nell had to die, but one thing's for sure: evil carries a gun at its side. For the sake of his memory and the child yet to be, make your street life, history — claim your future now. You know how!

### Thinking of You

girl i can't stop thinking  
of you  
everything i do  
i do it for you  
when i sleep i hope i dream  
about you  
when i'm watching t v  
a photo of you  
pops into my head  
i love you pixie  
and you already know it  
i think of you  
no matter what i'm doing  
i get write-up's 'cause  
i drift off  
into my own lil' world  
thinking of you  
and what we could  
accomplish  
i love you my boo  
pixie

-Lil' Kev, 150 Crew

**From The Beat:** It would be hard to imagine a sweeter poem than this. From dreams to photos to write-ups — sounds like love!

## On The Map And Cuttey's Page

### *I Pray For All*

in this world i'm just a person livin'  
why i do not know  
some say to live  
but if we as people was here to live  
then why must we die  
in time the end will come  
i cry askin' the lord why must people die  
why do we feel pain and not love  
the opposite of life is death  
the object of success is happiness  
if life was a game — i lose  
see what makes you weak can  
also make you strong  
do we think before we react  
or will we just react  
time is now to live and see success  
may i do the best for all that have pain  
i pray for all people to live in peace

**-Cuttey, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** We see you reaching deep inside, feeling the pain of life and wondering why it has to be like this! And while no one can prevent death, eventually, many do achieve happiness successfully. The key to your freedom is not just the one that unlocks your door, but learning to think before you react to intimidation, temptation, or even self-righteous raging. With your compassionate heart, you will find peace in love.

### *Too Deep In the Game*

I started selling 'cane when I was nine years old.  
That's when an OG told me to do it for money, never for fame!

So when I got started, I set my mind on one thang — and that was to feed my family. But I never thought it would get this far! 'Cause I got to robbing people and stealing people's cars. Began to pull triggers with no hesitation or regard.

So when I look back, I want to change my life around. But I'm afraid I'm too deep in the game.

**-On The Map, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** No one's in too deep until he's buried six feet beneath. All you need to do is make up your mind. Then chase a job as hard as you used to grind, and you'll stay living free and feeling fine! Your other choices are: incarceration or dying.

### *Survived the Streets*

surviving in the streets was hard  
every day i looked death in the eye  
watching partners die  
said i gotta get that money to survive  
i was ready to kill  
had to steal just to get a meal  
the devil just six feet away  
this was my life every day  
when i was trying to survive in the streets  
glad i'm alive writing the beat

**-On The Map, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** It's by the grace of God you survived; yeah, you're lucky to be alive! And you'd be crazy to go back to that life, unless you want to die by gun or knife. Or you might be "lucky" and get locked up again. Or you could think of a better plan and quit while you can! Get your GED and a JOB.

### *Give Me Time*

give me time  
that's all i have is time  
time to make a chance for some people livin' in vain  
and thinking of pain  
how is it that we do things  
and don't give the time to stop and look  
i say to myself — help  
help our people think before we react  
all we have is time  
some say can't take no more  
but the more we take the more we get  
at times i get sick  
sick of hates and fights  
can i live to the end  
to speak good and not bad  
can i live longer  
and stronger than those who are weak  
i think to myself and wonder  
will we grow as a people  
or will we die in a world of hate  
give me time  
if we get together  
life can get better  
somebody die' everyday  
i cry everyday  
'cause half the time it's my own people  
still i keep my head up and hope for the best  
the end — love

**-Cuttey, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** Keep the strength to carry on and do your best. Even if you cry everyday, you'll pass all tests in the name of love till hate itself is laid to rest, at least in your compassionate chest — the more love takes, the more love gets. It may not come when you want, but it will be right on time. Meanwhile, thanks for your terrific rhymes!

### *Life As a Dope Dealer*

life as a dope dealer ain't cool  
on the block twenty-four/seven  
packin' a pistol just to protect your product  
man here come them ninjas we got to bust  
now here come the cops got to stash your glocks  
or you can run but if you get caught  
might as well call it a wrap  
they will take you to the back streets  
and beat you with a baseball bat  
then you wake up in the middle of nowhere  
bleeding out the side of your head almost half dead  
it ain't cool when you can't do nothing about it  
so for the new ones that think it's cool not going to school

stay in school 'cause trust me  
i've been there done that and look where i'm at

**-On The Map, 150 Crew**

**From The Beat:** It all depends on your point of view: being at Camp may look bad to you; but to the one on his way to the Y, he'd love to be giving the Camp another try! If you'll take your own advice and go to school, you won't be back in the Hall feeling a fool, or stressing over what the judge will choose to do with you! It's a losers game, and all the players end the same.

## "In My World"

### If I Was Another Person

Being in my world isn't all that good. I gangbang to the fullest and I do a lot of bad things and I don't plan on changing. But if I was another person, I wouldn't want to be in my world because all I do is rob people, smoke weed and drink a lot of alcohol.

I have a lot of friends, but they do the same thing I do — it's like a chain. If we are kickin' it and some one passes by, if I don't rob him, my patna will. I guess I rob people just to get money and have fun. If I get out, I'm going to stop robbing people but I'm still going to gangbang to the fullest. It's ride to die on mine.

To the homies stay up and don't let no one smash on you, and to the homies, Jose and Lazy, be cool and don't run from Camp. I've been doing cool trying to keep my head up and just preparing for the worst. I hope they don't send me to CYA but if they do I'm going to earn my respect. Well homeboys, be safe and stay up and don't let no one get you down. I'm out, later.

-Twin

**From The Beat:** We congratulate you on your decision to stop robbing people. Remember the rush you get from doing this doesn't last and neither does the money you get. Do you have a family to help you out? Will you turn to another hustle? With your ability to be a respectful and smart young man, we know you can get a legit job and you can still represent if you choose. CYA is one of those places you can go in with 1 to 2 years but end up doing 5 to 8 for fighting. Is this what you want for the next 5+ years of your life? To be locked up without family, girls and freedom? We urge you to think more.

### In My World

In my world there is four walls,  
In my world I'm told what to do,  
In my world I'm locked behind a door  
In my world I can't walk free  
In my world I only control me  
In my world I wish I was free  
In my world that my friends don't see,  
In this world it's not for me,

The world I talked about was Juvenile Hall

-Josh

**From The Beat:** You described being in Juvenile Hall to the "T" and we're pretty sure those in your situation can relate. Make sure that you do the right thing so that you won't have to stay in this world and... keep writing to The Beat.

### Makin' Money

in my world i see myself  
makin' money  
with a fat ol' house  
and a bad car  
a couple of kids  
and a fine female  
that would do it all  
oh yeah one more thang  
r i p to all the homeboys  
that done passed away  
what's up to all the homeboys  
that's locked up and on the outs  
tryin'a survive out here  
in this dirty life  
i'm out

-Derty Dee

**From The Beat:** If you're making money and raising children in a fat ol' house, you must be out of "this dirty life" — 'cause if you stay in it, you're only headed toward jails, hospitals or death.

### My First Love

My world is crazy because I can't be with my girlfriend, she means everything to me.

I'm real mad because I haven't talked to her in like five days, that is really stressful to me. The bad thing about it is that the first week of our relationship I came in here, and have been here for three weeks, today. Anyway, I just wish I wasn't in here so I could be with her, my little wifey, my silver dollar, my everything.

I hope she loves me as much as I love her. I have been sad, because she has not wrote to me and I have. I don't know what's going on, but I hope she hasn't forgot about me and started a new relationship. Because if she did, I'm going to have a broken heart, and watery eyes. My life right now feels like a pen with no ink, and an empty box without her in my life.

Well I just wanted to say that I love you girl and I'm always going to think about you 'till I get out and see those green shiny eyes once again. By the way she (Dennise) was the first girl I ever fell in love with, so she is very special for that.

-Lil' Beto

**From The Beat:** It really hurts to be separated from your love. It feels like part of you is missing. Dennise is your first love; it will be beautiful if things work out between the two of you. If not, remember this, no matter what happens, your heart will always find someone to love. All you have to do is open yourself up to people.

### My World

My life is a jungle, I struggle, hustle Monday thru Sunday. They tell me the world's mine, but hey I don't want it... who want it? How could it be mine when I'm still stuck and still strugglin' lost an' lonely so I holla at the voices of the wind as a friend. But I predicted this endin' back in the days, 'cause I had visions of bad decisions, I knew some would go astray.

Although I pray and I pray you see I do, but see when an individual lose, its no more united, divided we fall. See this is hard, we all got dealt messed up cards, but don't complain just play the hand that you was dealt. You play 'em right, you prevail, you play 'em wrong an' you fail. It ain't hard to tell when you're ahead of self-destruction 'cause I can look at the pieces of the puzzle and it ain't no love involved. Everything it was dissolved. We all heartless in ways and together we raw and it ain't a soul that could mess with that. But if we split up, we tied up... what's up with that? Don't let the devil get in as a friend, he pretendin' to be friends, don't be taken by that snake in the grass, tryin' to stick you fast. Don't drop your guard keep it up thru this violence.

-Lil' Ray

**From The Beat:** How are you playing the cards you were dealt? Do you think you are prevailing? How do the cards a person is dealt affect their life? Talib Kweli, a famous rapper once said, "the flower that blooms from the ghetto is stronger than the flower that blooms from the meadow." Can you feel that?

### In My Mind

in my world you see folks dying  
their mothers crying  
because their son done  
chose the wrong path  
now he dead and gone  
ain't no coming back  
in my world you see  
killers gangsters and hustlers  
in my mind there's a lot  
of crazy thoughts

-Dru

**From The Beat:** If those crazy thoughts are about revenge, then you'll soon be meeting the same end or locked down for life in the Pen. Can't you see past the savagery of the street? Don't you have anything else to teach youngsters in the pages of The Beat?

### Things I Want To Change

In my world I wish me and all my family can go to AA. and we all can live a good life and not try to hurt one another.

See, since my great-granny died, it seems like everyone want to get along with each other, and all they do is argue with each other.

That's the things I want to change. Thank you.

-Dayneisha

**From The Beat:** Dayneisha, arguing is no good. If everyone wants to get along, then everyone needs to have patients. Everyone needs to show a little respect to each other. The only way people can get along is by communicating. If arguing is the only form of communication that is going on, then there will be no progress. How can you get people to understand this?

### In My World I See

in my world i see i should be  
getting a release this week  
in my world i see i will be  
a professional actor in my early twenties  
in my world i see i should be  
living at home with my family  
in my world i see me strive  
to have a happy and successful life  
and last but not least  
in my world i see my mom  
living her life stress-free

-Mark

**From The Beat:** In the world of The Beat, now we see what you see your world to be as it should be.



### Homies and Their Families

In my world, first off, it would be nothing but homies and their families. There will only be our gang, and the police would be homeboys, too — so no homies would ever be locked up.

And all the homies would have fat mansions, and anything else they wanted, like — cars, girls, weed, beer and hard liquor; 'cause it ain't that good now. To all locked up, stay up.

-Abo

**From The Beat:** We cut this short because even after you dream of there being no such thing as an enemy — you go to war! Do you plan to have kids ever? How will they and their mothers feel about fat, rich, high, drunken daddies who don't know how to make a home, teach, or show love to anyone but their equally irresponsible, rich, high, drunken, violent buddies? You know you'd start killing each other soon anyway, balling out of control.



## The Life I Lived

well in my world  
i done went through a lot of shhh  
i couldn't even let my mind slip  
or i just might'a got clapped  
even though my ninjas and i had fun  
we still in that beef from sun to sun  
i'd be posted on the block  
busting a hundred knocks  
stacking my racks  
running from task  
they kept me out of breath  
sticking so my freedom  
wouldn't get swept  
that's just the life i used to live  
r i p ANT and Bbo

-Brucie-bo

**From The Beat:** We'll never forget all those amazing poems B-bo used to write when he was at Camp. We had the highest hopes for him and his plans. What are your plans? No one living that life has enough breath to escape from jails, hospitals or death.

## Hard To Live a Day

my world is not the world  
you would want to live in  
because my world is different  
than everyone else's  
my world is hard to live a day  
and you think about what  
you are going to do  
and how to get out of it

-Charly

**From The Beat:** Do you want to live in such a world? If you get as serious as you can get about how to change your life and you stick to it — soon your life will be better in every way. Okay?

## "In My World"

### A World of Guns

in my world people get killed  
all day everyday  
in my world you need a gun  
to walk up an' down the street  
like one day i was in the 'hood  
an' someone walked up  
an' killed my ninja  
an' all my folks got down  
on that ninja an' he died  
that's what goes on in my world  
an' that's real talk for real

-Lil V

**From The Beat:** We believe your story's real, and we believe that's how you feel — but that just means all the more, you need to change before everyone you know and love is either locked down or no longer walking above the ground.

### That's My World

I ain't never had nothing, till I got to the weed game. My patna put me on the game. He gave me a five-hundred-dollar bundle, and I gave him four hundred dollars.

Then I said, "Forget that!" And I bought my own zips and made my own money. Bought a car with spinners. Then I got shot a couple of times, and they tried to take me out — 'cause I got too much money.

I was living on a hot spot, and everybody can't do that — can't have as much as I had in my world at sixteen years old!

I met this girl. She came up to me and bought a sack. Now she's everything I want and need. She kinda changed me a little bit. I stopped hangin' on the block so much. She's got a job. She works. And she goes to school, but she doesn't want to go to her prom because I'm in here!

I told her, "Go! You don't need to wait on me." I love her so much, and I want her to have fun at her prom. It should be the best night of her life!

I'm a go to Camp and do my program. I don't need to get high on weekends.

-Lil' Camp

**From The Beat:** Naturally it turned your head to have all that money come your way at such a young age. Then you fell in love! And it sounds like you found a good girl, too. But if she loves you, how can prom be the best night of her life with you in here? If you love her as much as you say, the changes you've made are just the beginning! Yeah, do that good program, but don't stop there — get yourself a job, so you can be out where you belong. For her sake and yours, too, put that easy money behind you and go legit. It may be hard, but in the end, it's more than worth it!

in my world you  
need a gun  
to walk up an'  
down the street

## "Weekly Writings"

### Back Again

What's up! Yeah, th'is Tui Tui. You know it! I'm going tell you a little somethin' somethin' about being back in this ditch.

Well, first, when I came back, it was Thursday the twentieth. I was only out for like two months. I was at a group home in Sacramento. And when I came back I went to same old unit I always go to. So the first day back, I was working.

Everybody in the unit was hating on me, 'cause I was working the first day back. Then the next day, Ms. Love put me on "top citizen" — and everybody was like, "Why is he on the 'top citizen' already?" And they were still hating on a player. So from Thursday till Sunday, that's when it was all bad for me.

Well, this is how it went down. I was working, right? So it was like twelve thirty; and this wannabe gangster was in his room; and his door was open. I wanted to get him right then, but staff was watching. So I waited till they left. After they cut I ran in that room and started fighting him.

These ninjas that were also workers made it hella hot by just standing there outside the door watching the fight. And that's how I got caught.

And after that, Boy's Control came and got me. They put me on a step program. And I've been down here since Sunday in Boy's Control doing nothing! I stole a box of red pens from Boys' Control, and that's how I'm writing this. But that's about it.

To Green Eyes up in max, I want to say — stay up, wherever you go. And to Richard, I want to say — be safe at Camp, 'cause I'm going to a group home in Fremont. I'm out. And to everybody up in this ditch, y'all stay up. I'm out.

-Tui Tui

**From The Beat:** There you were, a worker and a top citizen, not stuck in your room like most of the others — and you had to start a fight! When will you learn? Do you intend to burn every opportunity you get, just to prove something? Prove what? Plus we heard the guy you fought was half your size! And you're all about "how I got caught" — when you should be: "Sorry I fought." You need a check up from the neck up!

### Good News

What's up! Yeah, th'is Tui Tui! I just got some good news today. I got an interview today. As I write this, today is Tuesday the twenty-fifth.

Well, like I was saying, I got interviewed today by a group home in Fremont! My PO had told me that I was going to Vallejo, but then I got this interview by a group home from Fremont. And so we were talking for like a half an hour, and my PO was there talking to us, too.

So they were like, "Yeah." The girl that came and interviewed me, she was like, "I'll take him." So my PO was like, "You're leaving on Friday."

So I was hella happy! I've only been in here for a week and a couple of days — and I'm out of this ditch! Straight up! Forget Juvenile Hall, I'm out of this ditch on Friday! What is it. Till next time. I'll holla. I'm out.

-Tui Tui

**From The Beat:** We don't know why you came back from the home in Sacto, whether it was something you did or not. But we know you messed up a privileged situation in the Hall — so, our point is: you've been given another opportunity to live outside of lockdown. Don't blow it with fisticuffs or drugs (remember the weed incident last time in the Hall?). Program staffers like you. The only one messing you up — is you!

### The Life I Have

generations have gone by  
people kill and people die  
i try to escape from the deadly places  
but everywhere i go i see killer faces  
now i'm stuck up in my cell  
it really sucks to be in jail  
i'm away from ones that i love most  
people all around me are trying to boast  
i'm trying to escape from all the fear  
sometimes at night i drop a tear  
the time i'm serving is not so great  
maybe being up in jail is my fate

-Tagalao

**From The Beat:** In twelve short lines we come to see where you've been, where you are, and where you need to be. If being a juvenile detainee helps you come to see a better way to escape the deadly street, then this is indeed where you're supposed to be. Having learned your lesson, you'll return to loved ones as a blessing — and live in their hearts, forever free.

I've only been in here for a  
week and a couple of days  
— and I'm out of this ditch!

### Back In This Again

What's up! Well, it's me again. Chucky back in this shhh again because I had a warrant and had run from the cops two times. So I am doing eight months, man!

It ain't nothing. I just probably will go to Camp or a maybe to a group home. To all, stay up and do your program so you can be back to the 'hood, along with me.

-Nelson

**From The Beat:** Do your program. Then go home free. And don't go back to your old criminal mentality, or they will lock you up and throw away the key. Take this suggestion, respectfully.

## "In My World"

### Thizneyland

In my world it's the nation of Thizlan  
Doin' shhh real big, bigger than King Kong  
The beef's on, my eyes is rollin'  
My teeth is grittin', I can't control it  
32 shots, my chop will hold it  
Pesos, I gots to hold it  
Mouth full of gold, I gots to show it  
Sticky icky 'dro, I gots to roll it  
Mind of a Menace, I love to show it  
Take fight on any ninja who ain't roguish  
Money is not 'in', fast as I blows it  
My chain is glistenin' like Iceberg Slim  
I'm an iceberg fit wit 'a faulty grin  
And I'm tryna sell a few mill' like Eminem

-Thinzel

**From The Beat:** We truly admire how clever you are, Thinzel. You have a great sense of language and the use of words for effect. But we have to tell you that all that wonderful talent will count for nothing if you keep showing that "mind of a menace" side for which the county and state have devised their own special worlds for called jails and prisons. Our fear is that when Thizneyland bumps up against Prisonland, you'll end up writing about that world of yours from inside that world of theirs. And — because you do have talents and because you do have a brain — when you lose, we lose.

### My World

In my world  
All I see is snakes and jakes  
That can't be trusted  
Waitin' to take a hustla's place  
To a youngsta it's nothing  
Shhh, I been doin' my thang  
My life, my world  
And ain't shhh change  
Growin' up is part changing yo' ways  
But who's to tell a youngsta  
That he can't get paid  
The game, I know this  
Fo' sho I'm focused  
See, I'm a block boy  
You didn't know I was roguish  
But now that you know this  
Until the next Beat  
I'm out wit' a peace sign  
Peace

-Player

**From The Beat:** You paint a pretty dark picture of your world. But when you ask, "who's to tell a youngsta that he can't get paid," all we can do is scratch our heads because, from where you sit right now, it's obvious to us that somebody is telling a youngsta he can't get paid — at least not in the way you mean. Until you start factoring in the system's response that puts you behind bars, and prepares you for a darker, dirtier cell down the line, then you're not really telling the whole story of your world.

### It Won't Change

In my world there's pimps and whores,  
money and clothes, drugs, and wars,  
people living the life of a G,  
putting fools on their knees,  
leaving them in seas of their blood.  
That's the way it is, things aren't gonna change.  
They try to control the gangs, but everything is getting worse.  
When you choose to bang,  
you bang until you're riding in the back of a hearse.  
I'm telling you stuff is not gonna change,  
'cause it's all part of the game.

-Prieto

**From The Beat:** You may be right about tvhings in general, Prieto, but just because "things" won't change is no reason why you can't change. You don't control the world, but you do have some control over your own decisions and choices. So tell us if you plan to change or not, and then tell us why — or why not.

### In My World

In my world...  
Money on my mind I got to get it  
Smokin' purple and blue  
And I get the thizzin'  
We handle business  
Sip Hennessy privilege  
Leave no trace no forensics  
I mess wit' work so my jeans be heavy  
Drop bombs on da block, Man, like  
Armageddon  
Gotta be easy gotta steady  
Side shown in a bucket or a Chevy  
I rep da Bay  
I flip da yay  
Ya boy be stunna like every day  
Boys got drama, I got nothin' to say  
All I do is prep and start to spray  
And where you stand is where you lay  
Just like a banana you can get peeled any day  
Dem boys from da Bay do not play

-Jeffery

**From The Beat:** When we read this, we think of little boys playing out in the dirt — only you don't play with toy guns. We aren't very impressed with the boasting that this piece displays, except that we know how truly deadly little boys can be. Do you think ten-year-olds should be allowed to "play with guns"? What about five-year-olds? No? Why not? What would life be like if every five-year-old was armed? Think about it.

### Dead Before 30

In my world, there is nothing but violence, gangs, drugs, power, lots of money, stealing, lying, etc...

A couple of years ago I used to be all against it. Now I can't get out of it. I'm affiliated with a gang.. I won't say the name because possible consequences.

About a year ago I was doing the worst drugs out there. I smoked way too much weed, doing about two 8-balls of cocaine a day. Then I would spend \$900 on crystal meth, a week. It screws your life up. Now I don't do any meth, or coke, but I still smoke weed.

I'm only sixteen years old, I used to roll with 20 – 30-year-olds that stayed strapped with some heavy artillery. About three months ago I was driving a made-up \$40,000 BMW without license or registration, with \$1500 in my pocket. Then I got pulled over.

Basically what I'm saying is all of this is worth nothing. It's too much to watch your back everywhere you go, or always having to run from the law. You wanna live your life honestly and lovingly. To tell you the truth, I probably won't even live to be 30, 'cause none of my friends have. Stay up out the game, and stay up period.

-Young D

**From The Beat:** How much would you estimate you've spent on all the drugs you've ever taken? Can you imagine what all that money could have purchased for your life? If all your friends have died before their thirtieth birthday, why can't you stop? We know it's not easy, but do you think it's easy living the life you're living? Is it easy going to the Hall? Is it easy thinking about your own death while still a teenager? Is it easy looking over your shoulder when you're on the outs? We just know there's a better way.

### The World

In my world I see nothing but tight stuff  
Old school cars please don't jock  
I rock this like I rock the mic  
Catch me all night  
And I am stackin' tonight  
With that thang on hip that I grip so tight

-Bird Man

**From The Beat:** Nothing but tight stuff in your world? Look around the world you're living in right this minute... tight, eh? You can shout your tribute to that "thang" on your hip all you want, but the fact that you've failed to mention so many other things about your world — such as children dying, mothers crying, bullets flying, and God sighing — tells us that there's much more to your world than what you praise here.

### Risk

In my world life is a risk. Every day I risk my freedom and life on the streets when I heat up my rivals. But I ain't tripping 'cause I'm down for whatever for my barrio and what I claim.

-Mickey

**From The Beat:** What do you claim besides a piece of turf you'll never own? We wish you were fighting for ownership of a house to live in, purchased with money earned decently, and struggling to pay your bills, but not struggling to stay alive.

### Step Up

In my world I'm always going to war. I hate the unit I'm in right now. I have staff always keepin' eyes on me. They pretend to be cool with you for a minute, but they all hella shady. Some of them act like they hard and think they're tough.

Sometimes I wish they would step in my room alone so I can show them that they are some squares, and can't do nothing when other staff isn't around to back them up.

So if you want a taste of this, step up to the plate. If not, get the hell out my face.

-Indio

**From The Beat:** Well, the problem we have with this piece, Indio, is that given the reality of the Hall (and all jails), what you wish for is never going to happen. While you're here, all the power lies with the staff and none with you. That may be a bitter pill to swallow, but it's almost the definition of jail. Since "they" won't step up to the plate (go one-on-one with you), maybe it's time for you to step up to the plate and keep yourself out of this lose-lose situation called juvenile hall! And by the way, do you feel this way about all the staff, or just certain ones?

### Untouchable

I can't be touched  
And everybody just smoke entirely too much  
There's blunts for rippin'  
Bottles for sippin'  
And a whole gang of pills so everyone start thizzin'  
I got my boy, Pill Clinton  
And Thizz Markie  
And all the kids in the world wanna be like me  
In my world  
We drink rum and coke  
The center of my world is no joke  
And in my world they call me Elliot Ness  
'Cause I act like I live inside a bulletproof vest  
In my world I got killas in the cuts  
So come to my world and try messin' wit' us

-Jordan

**From The Beat:** You've left a couple of details out about your world, haven't you? For example, children die in your world long before their time, don't they? Also, return trips to juvenile hall is part of that same world, isn't it? All the blunts, the coke, the thizzing and the drank can't change the fact that far too many young people, like you Jordan, allow themselves to be made into slaves, even if just temporarily, by a system that is well prepared for the "killas in the cuts" you write about. What we find so hard to understand is why so many would use their freedom to give other people the power to take their freedom away. It just makes no sense to us. Can you explain it?

### In My World

In my world there's lots of dreams and fantasies and soon they will come true. The first dream that will come true would be getting my first degree in criminal justice so I can make that money and move up out of the 'hood.

-Blanca

**From The Beat:** What are you doing now to get on the track towards that first degree? The plan sounds great, though we hope that you're motivated at least as much by your knowledge of criminal justice and wanting to help folk out as you are by money.



## "In My World"

### It's Crazy

In my world, things is crazy all the damn time. If it ain't one thing it's another thing — fights, arguments, everything. That's the kind of things that's going on when you locked down.

-Leek B5

**From The Beat:** Our experience tells us that the things you describe go on all the time whether or not you're locked up. The trick is to be able to deal with all the craziness without putting yourself in harm's way — and harm includes getting caught up in the Hall.

### Endless Drama

In my world, everything is messed up. It's always drama. I tell myself not to stress. That's when I feel myself start to overheat like a bucket with a messed up water pump.

My world consists of violence, hate, anger, love. Matter of fact, it ain't even my world. It's the system.

-Peter B5

**From The Beat:** So, you make a distinction between your world and the system's world. Then tell us if it were just your world, what would it look like?

### No Freedom In My World

In my world I don't get any freedom because I got locked up right now. Every day we was against these four walls and we can't do anything we want to do.

-Sam B2

**From The Beat:** Sounds like the Hall alright. What's your world like on the outs?

### Dream World

In my world there will be no guns. There will be love and respect, and no more violence or killing. I will love everybody.

-Bobby Ray B1

**From The Beat:** That sounds like a world we want o live in. Do you see this happening one day? How can you work towards making this a reality?

### In Jame's World

In my world it's hard to live here in YGC. It's levels you go through, but first you go through B1, B2, B4, B5 the worst place to be with people calling yo' house every night and coming to YGC once every week.

People carrying guns because people run up on you and let them have it. That's my opinion. When people try to run up on you, that ain't cool. When people try to run up on you, get them before they get you.

-James B1

**From The Beat:** Okay, get them before they get you, but where does it all end? You get them before they get you. They get you before you get them. After too long of that there will be nothing left but grieving family members.

**People  
would not be  
killing in  
my world.**

### My Family

What's up, Beat? Once again I'm here to share some thoughts.

I really feel bad about myself. My family importance is not that high. I been thinking a lot lately of all shhh I am going through. All the thoughts make me mad.

When I am out, I don't see how bad my mom and brothers feel about me. I stay drunk and high. I just like the feeling. I love the taste and I like the sticky ick.

Well, I have made my family suffer a lot. I also be mad because I am a whole different person from all my family. All the stuff I do, I get into trouble and it affects my family. So I give a damn about what other people say.

I fo' sho going to change, even though I love smoking and sometimes I like to drink. I can stop 'til I get off of probation and have my life straight out. Right now I have many things going on.

More important to me is me and my family. Forget a friend. They will always backstab you. There's no friend in this world, for real.

-Slick B4

**From The Beat:** Are you mad at yourself for not seeing what you were doing to your family, or for not caring? It seems you can see the negative effect you are having on them only when you're locked up. How will you remember this valuable lesson once you're on the outs again? We may not agree with you about friends (we believe in friendship — as long as you choose carefully), but we definitely feel you on the importance of family.

### Hate To Love

In my world life is sometimes hard and the person I want to be with seems so far. Love, I sometimes hate because of the pain and rain it brings.

-Arnisha GU

**From The Beat:** Love does have a way of complicating things. When you love someone being away from them is hell but in the long run things work out fine.

### All We Need Is Love

I think we need to love each other, join up against our enemies, stop the drug dealing and killing, and start helping each other.

In my world there would be peace, love, respect, and no crime or trouble and no drugs.

-Mark B1

**From The Beat:** We have heard from many people that peace is what they want in their worlds. How can we get people to start doing and stop dreaming about it? How do you think we can get people together to accomplish this?

### In My World

In my world I see bald-headed little girls

In my world I see thick chocolate girls

In my world my favorite snack is Reese's with chocolate swirls

In my world I love my girl

In my world sometimes I feel like hell the world.

-Lil' P-Hop B2

**From The Beat:** What in your world makes you feel like hell?

### Perfection

In my world there wouldn't be hate, jealousy, racism.

In my world, there wouldn't be violence, corruption, and delinquency.

In my world there wouldn't be prisons, juvenile halls, camps, the Y.

In my world there would be love and peace.

In my world there wouldn't be nothing like what's going on.

My world would be perfect.

In my world it would be a cool ass place to chill without no worries about nothing.

In my world. Only if this was my world.

-Magdalena YTEC

**From The Beat:** Why do you think things are so hectic on the streets right now? We can think of one way to make your perfect world come true: Write a book. When you write a novel, you are "god." You create the characters and the world they live in, and then you watch what they do. We'd love to read that book, Magdalena.

### No Killing Allowed

People would not be killing in my world. People would be happy. They would be playing basketball and football, and people would be doing what they want to do.

But they would not be killing other people. They would respect one another. And everyone would be at the same set.

-Antonio B1

**From The Beat:** Why do you think people are not respecting one another right now? What needs to happen so that people begin to respect one another, and stop the senseless killings that are going on?

### Where I Want To Go

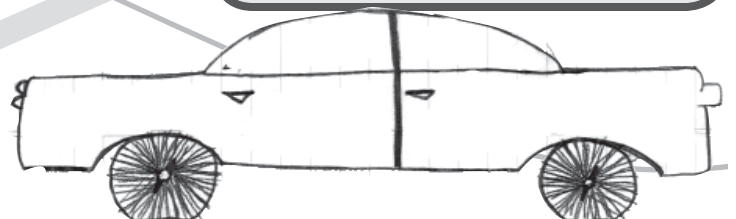
In my world, I feel I am doing the things I need to do in life to make it where I want to go. I feel that the Hall is like death, everyone come from the dusk.

But where should I be? In the life of the positive world 'cause it is free. Free of space to go where you want. But it always what you want your life to be like at times.

That is the way my world is. Peace

-Gabriel B4

**From The Beat:** Where do you want to go? How do you think you're going to get there?





## "Cycles In Your Family"

### Broken Cycles

Some of the cycles I like to be broken would be my uncles, because they always went to jail and did drugs. I thought that was okay at first, but now I see how messed up my life is.

I want to change my life and I didn't want to follow my dad's, uncles, etc., paths. I want to change the cycle for me and for my other siblings, because I didn't want them to go through my family's life.

My life's important because they all look up to me. The first thing I did was feel ashamed of myself when I went back.

-Mike YTEC

**From The Beat: What do you need to do to break away from the mold set by your uncles and other family members? How can you be sure to steer your younger siblings away from your family members that aren't doing so good? That shame you felt, how can it keep you from falling back?**

### Round And Round

The cycle I see in my family all the time is it seems as if we always go about two or three weeks with no problems, then out of nowhere we get into a huge fight and the tension last for about two or three weeks. It's like we are addicted to drama.

There is no way we can go a month without getting into an argument. I just wish that there was a way to subdue the monster that always creeps up on us when we think that everything is all good.

-Young Skitz YTEC

**From The Beat: Do you have any idea what sparks these spats? Can you see the signs before the shhh hits the fan? That's the time to try to head off the coming storm. How many people are there in your household? What is it like going through your everyday routine with all the tension in the house?**

### Family Cycle

A cycle in my family is that you will not find any two people with the same problem — except drugs. My aunt smokes. My uncle smokes. And they both ain't got shhh. That's a cycle that I wish I could stop.

-Peter B5

**From The Beat: Are you doing anything more than wishing? What steps have you taken, or are you planning to take, to cut this cycle off right here?**

### My Life's Been A Struggle

My life has been a struggle, but I know that the suffering each and every one of us goes through is painful. But there is always someone else who has suffered more. I have been in abusive relationships with a lot of drug use and alcohol in it. It's just crazy, sometimes that's just all you know, you feel me. If you see it in your family or around your environment, then you think it's right.

But I think that you can change your ways around, but it's up to you to break the cycle. They say it is not the life you have to change, so that's all I got to say 'cause I just can't get too deep in the conversation, so I'm out!

-Estrella GU

**From The Beat: You have such a positive and compassionate attitude, Estrella. Keep coming from the heart and you will succeed in this world. And remember to treat yourself with this love, too, you deserve it.**

### Cycles In The Family

Man, stuff been going around in my family for hell of long, like my cousin I got the game from because he used to be in the game.

Man, I am trying to get out of the game. I have been in it for a few years, and I am trying to get out of it because everybody is getting killed. This is the longest time, Man, and I am finally getting the hell out of here.

I have been in here for two and a half months, and they are sending me to Walden House for three months, and if I do good, I get to go home. If I am bad, I go to a group home for two years. That's why I am trying to change. Peace. One love.

-Money Earnin' Mount Vernon B1

**From The Beat: What do you hope to learn from your time at Walden House? You say your cousin used to be in the game. Is he still? If not, how did he get out? Can you get out like he did? With two years in the group home hangin' over your head, it shouldn't be too hard to deal with that little three months. What's the hardest part of having to "do good"?**

### Jail Cycles

In my life, everyone went to jail and that is bad. I was going to change the cycle, but I got caught up in some dumb stuff. That's why I'm in the YGC. And that is how my family cycle is going on.

-Spoon B4

**From The Beat: It's certainly not too late to change the cycle. If you know what brought you here, then you know what will keep you from here? The question is really whether it's worth it to you to break this cycle, or just to take the easy route and go with what's familiar. Of course, if you take that route (as you have up to now), your future is pretty well set. And we don't think it's the future you dream about.**

### Cycles In My Family

The cycles in my life are hard because I feel that I'm following other people and my dad, but I don't want to be like him because I look back at what my mom told me about him and I don't want to be like him at all.

-Young Sam B2

**From The Beat: What do you need to do to be sure you don't end up like him?**

### Cycles

I see cycles in my family. The good cycle is everyone in my family mostly goes to school.

-Mitchell B2

**From The Beat: Goes to what kind of school: college, graduate school, MIT? What kind of things have people in your family done for a living?**

**I used to  
steal my  
dad's drink,  
because he  
didn't know I  
drank too.**

### When I Go Home

When I go home, I'm going to pull myself together, and stop hanging around the friends that get me in trouble. And encourage myself to do the right thing not the wrong thing. And stay in school. And go every day, not just every once a week. And never come back to this place now.

Well, that's what I'm saying now, but I know I can do it. If I say I can, that mean I can.

-Kamay GU

**From The Beat: Excellent attitude, Kamay. We hope we never see you back in the Hall.**

### I Know It

I know for sure I got my alcoholism from my dad. He used to drink a lot. I never thought my dad would quit drinking alcohol.

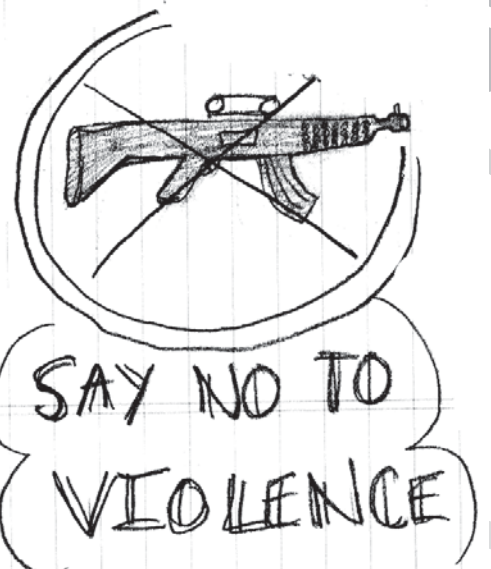
I used to steal my dad's drink, because he didn't know I drank too. I used to take a bottle of Martel. He had about eight of them on top of my grandparent's pictures. I stole around three bottles.

When my dad threw a big party at my house he and my uncle would buy a lot of Budweiser and put it in a cooler. After the party when my dad would go to sleep, I'd sneak up there and take about ten cans and drink it with my dog. But that was a long time ago.

When I started making money, I bought my own drank. I got wrapped for drinking. When my dad quit, I quit. I think he stopped because I was taking all his stuff. But the good thing is we both stopped.

-Phu Quy YTEC

**From The Beat: Congratulations to both you and your dad for taking the big step to quit. We've never known a problem that couldn't be made worse by alcohol. But we have to ask about you drinking with your dog. Did your dog get drunk too? How does that work? Did your Pops ever find out you were snatchin' his drank?**



## Be Strong: A Letter To Myself

Protect yourself and be strong. Have faith and know what's right. I love you. You know it's a hard world so don't let it change you. You are a child of God, and He love you too. Keep your head up.

-Make B5

**From The Beat:** This is all good advice, M, and we agree with every word. But how does being a child of God instruct your life? Does this knowledge help you get through the rough times? Do you think God put you here, or did you do that to yourself? If you did it, then where was God? What is His plan for you?

## A Letter To Myself

Dear Keezy,

What have you been thinking? You have been making lots of bad choices in your past, selling drugs, posting on the block, stop going to school for what, smoking weed for what? You don't even know.

Now look where you're at YGC (you got caught). So why you in here, son?

RIP to the homies Money- B, Ren, Cheap- C, G- Thang. And I hope you get out.

-Keezy B1

**From The Beat:** This letter is all well and good, but what actions are you going to take? Getting out is much easier than staying out. Could this be the start of change for you? You know what's wrong and what needs to change, so what are you waiting for?

## Dear Me

I would say, keep your head up and do the things that are going to make me successful in life. Try to make better decisions and choices. Go to college so you can get some degrees, so you can make big money and own your own business.

-Mitchell B2

**From The Beat:** What kind of business would you like to run? What will it take on your part to be successful in life? How can you be sure to make better decisions in the future?

## My Baby

Damn girl, I think you got my nose wide open. I don't know how you do it. Maybe it's your body. Maybe it's just your mind smarts that got me hooked 'cause you know I love a challenge and that's just what you gave me when I wanted to get in dem jeans.

You wanted to wait for marriage, but then kept debatin' whether you wanted to or not, being that you was still a virgin. But you gave in 'cause you love me, and I always will love you no matter what. That's why you my baby girl, takin' walks in the park from me to you.

I told you that I always will be there even though I'm locked up. Just don't forget I miss yo' lips and the way you move yo' hips, just everything about you. I'm goin' to see you in a few.

Lil' mommy be easy. I'm just holdin' it down. I'm out.

-Cudabeez B5

**From The Beat:** With a love like this, Cudabeez, you must have already realized that the thug life will only lead you away from her and from your baby. We know how hard it is to avoid the block, but you've made it clear just how hard it is to be away from the one you love, too. You might think you can have both, but the prisons are full of people who thought the same. Are you ready to make a sacrifice for the ones you love?

## Living The Life

I can't lie. I love living this life because it got a good and a bad side. I don't cry when this life do me good, so I can't cry when it do me bad. See, I feel this game is like a seesaw. It go up an' down, and right now I feel it's going down.

But I know it's gone go up again, and when it do, I'm go keep it up. But like a seesaw, it gone go back down.

-Lil' Dakota B4

**From The Beat:** Are you just a passive rider on this seesaw, or do you have something to do with whether it's going up or down?

## "A Letter To Yourself"

### Richer Than Bill Gates

The advice I would give myself is to get a job, not be on the street like my cousin, stay in school and go into college. Then get a good job where I can support my family and my kids and be richer than Bill Gates.

-Bobby Ray B1

**From The Beat:** If you are going for something, go for the top right? What would you like to study in college? What kind of job would you like to have? Where do you see yourself living in about ten years? Who are you going to help with all the money that you'll have, if anybody at all?

### Dear Self

I strongly believe that I need to stay away from the drama and the trouble that I'm getting myself into. That's my first advice.

My second advice is to keep in mind that I need to stay sober in order to finish my program. I really need to follow those two main pieces of advice, and really think twice about what I want to do.

It's just hard so avoid a fight. It really is, feel me. When it comes to beatin' a female or a ninja butt, I can never say no for an answer. I gotta fight regardless who it is, if I win or not.

All I gotta say is I'm that female that gets down and that's ready for anything. It's also hard to stay sober, and I know that for a fact. Especially if you got all yo' ninjas doing it right in front of you.

But it's all good, that's life.

-Tin YTEC

**From The Beat:** No, it's not all good. Fighting is not good (if for no other reason than it gets you in trouble). Getting drunk is not good because it leads back here. So, why do you feel the need to fight so much? If it's so hard to say no if all your homies are drinking, maybe it's time to stop hanging with those friends and find a new crowd.

### A Letter To Yourself

If I had a chance to write a letter to encourage myself, I'll write to myself to go to school, stay outta trouble, stop hanging, change my friends.

-Jovanny B1

**From The Beat:** Now that you have heard your own advice, what are you going to do with it? How are you going to stay in school, and stay outta trouble? You might not necessarily have to change your friends, but you will have to know when to say no to them. Is it possible to kick it somewhere with your friends that won't get you into trouble?

...keep in mind  
that I need to stay  
sober in order to  
finish my program.

### Letter To Myself

Right now I got locked up in B2 because I violated my probation curfew, school, drugs, and I had been locked up since April 19 to May 25.

In the unit, we do the same thing every day. Some of the staff treats us very bad and controls our time. If I could change bad stuff to good stuff, I will try my best.

-Sam B2

**From The Beat:** What bad things do you need to change to good in order to stay system free?

## "Weekly Writings"

### Why Be Nosey

It's a lot of people that always have they nose up other people business. It ain't coo' at all. If I don't say yo' name, then that means that you're not involved in my conversation. I know I'm not the only one that feel like this, but damn, when I get on the phone I don't want people ask me who you talking to!

Don't trip. If you do not know the person at all it does not even matter to you because if it ain't concerning you don't worry about a thang. To be honest, I won't be in yo' business like that so don't be in mine. I'm gon be easy. Holla at yo' boy.

-Cudabeez B5

**From The Beat:** Don't you think it's just human nature to be curious? We know what you mean, though, when people butt into other people's conversations and they don't even know what is going on. We guess that when you're locked up, there's not a lot of "new" stuff to learn, so people just naturally want to know what's cooking. But we'll try to remember to stay out your business!

### Truth

I apologize, Chailia, for not telling you I have a son. I hope that you will get a long with my son when you meet.

I meant to tell you, but it slipped my mind. I hope you will accept my apology that I have written to you.

-R B4

**From The Beat:** Well, as long as you call your piece "Truth," is it really true that having a son just slipped your mind? That's a hard thing to forget...





## Still Strugglin'

Man, I'm still strugglin' tryna survive out chere in the Hall. I don't like how this system is run. Like on Saturdays you only get two snacks, and it ain't coo' at all. Then for our rec time, it's always an excuse or delay, and I highly disapprove of that.

But I'm just a minor. I can't hardly do anything to stop what my co-detainees and myself go through. It's like we all want to take off on staff 'cause how they come to work disrespectin' us 'cause they havin' problems of they own at home. So some just be like, "Oh well, I'll take it out on the kids."

I'm glad that they don't do that to me any more. Only time is if I say something or have an attitude other than that it's all good. I really can't complain. Reason why we still struggle is because of society that we live in that we want to be a part of. That's why we have beef and war on the street.

But some scared to fight the war in Iraq. To tell you the truth, I will not fight the White man's war. If it's that important, why can't Bush take his ass and fight? That's why I say that we still strugglin', 'cause they make us fight. If we don't then we locked up. Ain't a win-win, still goin through shhh, just a black man still strugglin'.

-Cudabeez B5

**From The Beat:** Do you think the staff deliberately delays your rec time? Why? From your observations over time, what simple changes do you think would make the most difference in the way the Hall is run?

## Hard Times

Hard times got a ninja dressed in all black Ready to snatch anything strapped to anybody Hard times got a ninja wondering where his next meal goin' come from.

Hard times.

Hard times got a ninja not knowin' who to trust.

Hard times got a ninja thinking his friends is

plotting and his family is scheming

Man, hard times got a ninja stressing

But I'm goin' make it through these hard times.

-D-Boy B5

**From The Beat:** These are truly hard times, you're right. But how are you planning to negotiate these hard times when you're on the outs in a way that will keep you on the outs? If friends are plotting and family is scheming, then maybe you should consider taking yourself out of the mix for a while.

## I'm trying to be cool and stay in school and not fail

## They Got Me

Damn, They got me. It's nothing. They can't mess with Newt Capone, I got to do some time.

But, yo, I need some trees. I ain't seen a blunt in a minute. The system got me messed up if they think they goin' to play me.

I ain't trippin'. When I get out I'm still going to be the king.

-Newt B4

**From The Beat:** They can't mess with Newt Capone, but you're fiending for some trees. Seems like they can mess with you, after all. So tell us how this works again — for a minute you're a king, then you're a slave for a while, then, a king again? Sounds to us like this king's head is not screwed on like royalty. Of course, you can continue to believe that you can go back to your old ways without facing the same (or worse) consequences, but such delusional thinking is definitely unkingly...

## I Love My Wifey

I love my wifey because she loves me, and I know so. I think she's not playing me. I say "I think" because I called her the other day, and she said while moaning, "Uhhhhmmm, I'll call you back."

Then I called my homie and he told me that he seen my wifey rollin' around in another ninja's car.

But I don't care. I love my wifey still 'cause she's holding me down.

-Young Fatz B5

**From The Beat:** In light of another piece you wrote called "Sprung Dummy," we find this piece particularly interesting. It seems like you're saying that you can't expect a girl to sit around and wait for you to get out of the Hall and miss out on all intimacy, but that you love her anyway because of how she supports you. Or, are you saying you just don't believe she's being untrue to you?

## Your sister is going to the first grade, and your brother is going to the 6th grade.

## This Place

I hate to wake up in this place. It seem like I'm never gone get out of here. I swear to God I hate myself for keep coming in this place.

I feel good when I go to sleep because I know it's another day gone. And when I wake up from a good sleep and hear someone telling me to take a bath, I just tell myself I hate this place.

-Lil' Dakota B4

**From The Beat:** Do you hate this place enough to do what you have to do to stay out of it? If you keep coming back, then we begin to think that you don't hate it here as much as you say. What's your plan for staying free when you hit the streets again?

## Life

We all make mistakes in life. Some of us own up to it, and some of us be in denial.

I know this one cat. He put us on front street in The Beat. I been knowing him my whole life almost, but he met some cats from the block and started selling rocks. I thought we was tight until I read his co-pow and found out that he wrote shhh about me and some other people.

We catch one case and ninja want to say I'm the enemy, when all I been trying to do is help them live. But you know, it's coo'. So who's the real backstabber, him or me? But it's cool. I'ma holla.

-Highly Upset B5

**From The Beat:** Of course you're highly upset if someone used The Beat to hate on you. That is not the purpose of The Beat, and it's a sign that the easy way out is to point the finger at someone else to take the heat off yourself. Jesus said: "The mote that is in the eye of your brother you see; but the beam that is in your own eye, you see not! When you cast the beam out of your own eye, then you will see how to cast out the mote from your brother's eye."

## A Letter To Juicy Loo

Dear Loo,

How you been since you been locked up? I bet it hell up in there. Man, you miss out on a lot of stuff out here. Your sister is going to the first grade, and your brother is going to the 6th grade.

I just want to tell you that I hope you've learned lesson. I hope you have thought about the shhh you've done. I hope you've seen that life is more important now.

I'll let you go now. Think about what I said to you. Love you and hope you touch down soon.

-Chato B5

**From The Beat:** Chato talks some very good sense. Now, the question is, will Juicy Loo take his advice and give up the game that got him here?

## Letter To Leek

What's up, playa? I've been watching you, and I think you losing it, playboy. Things that have been happening would not have been going on a little while ago. It's like you mellowing out for some reason. That would be coo' only if you was not in a negative environment as the one that you in right now.

Just get back to how you was. That being coo' act ain't working, playa.

-Leek B5

**From The Beat:** We're not sure what this advice means, Leek. Are you saying that you've grown softer and you need to get back on your toes? If so, all we can say is that before you started "mellowing" is when you came to the Hall. So it seems to us that you should be advising yourself to continue getting mellow, so mellow in fact that you decide the game isn't worth it.

## Trying

I'm trying to stay strong through all that's going on, playing the right cards because I know it's gone be hard. I need to stay on track like a fat person with a Big Mac, or a bald-headed man with no hat.

I'm trying to be cool and stay in school and not fail

I don't want to go to jail with no bail

I learned my lesson, so don't test me

-Leon B5

**From The Beat:** What is the lesson that you've learned, Leon? Can you apply the lesson to your life on the outs so that you never have to come to a place like this again? What changes do you plan to make in your life to prove that you've learned that lesson?



## Dear Jack

Hi Jack. How are you doing? Me, I'm okay, just trying to get myself together so I could be successful in life. I also hear that you was doing the same thing. Just keep doing the same thing that I'm doing, and we will meet up again. But until then, have a nice time.

-S Boy

**From The Beat:** What are you doing to prepare for success on the outs? What's your plan when you get out that will keep you free?



## Someone You're Close To

Yo', it's a big payback  
revenge at my the tip of my lips  
grip on my fifth  
y'all don't understand the pain I go through  
half of y'all can't even dig it  
y'all can't even picture a ninja  
poppin' someone close to you  
best believe my first boy gon' be blessed  
wit' your name  
I love big bra  
RIP Fred, Reem, Lee, and Cheee

-J-Stub B2

**From The Beat:** Unfortunately we meet a lot of folks who can relate to what you're saying here. We wish that weren't true, because that would mean violence wouldn't be so off-the-hook these days. Are you doing anything to keep yourself from being in a RIP list any time soon?

## The Real Deal

We started in the sandbox  
Went to school, played fight  
Put each other in headlocks  
Now look where we are  
Behind bars  
Me for a cannon  
You for a murder charge  
We wished on the same shining star  
I was always the smart one  
You was smart too  
But you chose to run the streets  
And be dumb  
But, hey, I can't talk  
I fell off later in the walk  
(to be continued)

-Byron Beez

**From The Beat:** We'd like to read your description of what happened between the time you were playing in the sandbox with your friend, and the time you began packing and he began running the streets. Was there anything anyone could have done to prevent that tragic change from taking over your lives?

## Wishing And Hoping

What's up, Bea'? I really don't know what to say 'cause today I woke up feelin' stressed out. I don't know why, but I just did. I got to be easy, though, 'cause I don't want to go off on anybody, so I got to keep it coo'.

But anyways, I just want my lil' homie to go home 'cause he's in here for a hot one. I wish I was on the outs so I could teach him right from wrong, feel me.

So for right now, be easy, 'cause I'm out. Holla.

-No Name B4

**From The Beat:** Why can't you teach your little homie right from wrong while you're both in the unit? Who taught you right from wrong? Did knowing the difference keep you out of here? Why not?

## My Life Is Hard And Rough

My life is hard and rough. I don't know what to do. People are getting killed left and right, it's crazy. I try to do good, but it seems like every time I try to get out the game, one of my ninjas get shot, then I'm right back in the shhh, because I can't make it seem like I'm soft, and I can't let no one play my folks. Because they won't let it happen to me and I'm not the type of man to snitch on someone or set someone up, but when they send me to New York to George Jr I will try my best.

So tell me what's the best for me Beat. Thank you.

-Whatdoido B2

**From The Beat:** If you're really honest with yourself, what do you think you need to do? What would you need to change to lead a less hectic life? One thing to keep in mind is that the game is going on while you're locked up, so it will keep going on when you return, whether you get wrapped up in it again or not. You need to decide what kind of life you want to lead.

## The Star Ain't Shining No More

I lived in a broken family for a few years  
I start wilding out so I show no fears  
For the past few years all I see is dropping tears  
The tears are falling like a star  
When the tears as fallin' to my chin I end up on da war  
I got so many problems in life it took me to da wrong place  
I never had no fun but replace  
The replace of my heart to turn it dark  
The star ain't shinning no more  
It ain't lightin' like B4  
My heart is dark like at night  
I struggle so hard, I cant see and it led me into a fight  
My life used to clean a wide like da water in the ocean  
But now the wind that I breathe became poison  
It's so dark the stars never shine  
It never flow and keep up with da rhyme  
My life ain't shinning this way  
I got introduced to da game, showed me not to play

-Jack B2

**From The Beat:** Sounds like the life you're leading is causing you a lot of pain. What can you do to change that? What do you need to stop doing and what do you need to start doing?

## My Family

Me and my family. When I was young I was a good little girl. Me and my mama use to be tight. My mama raised me when I was a baby, then my grandma wanted to raise me so she did.

When I was seven, my grandma brought me back out here 'cause I was born and raised in the ghetto (Sunnydale), but I wasn't actin' ghetto.

But then when I was ten, my grandma took me back.

-Back and forth GU

**From The Beat:** Man, you've been here and there and here and there. Does anyone ever ask you where you want to be? Who do you like living with and where?

## This Is Takin' Mine

I turned myself in and I feel hella stupid because I wish I was out, but I know what I need to do as far as getting my life together. I got plans, and to accomplish them, I need to complete a program. Every day it takes me knowing I'm not in the real world; I'm in this purple and khaki wearing the county's underwear. I'm not keeping it, but being who I am, I'm gon' stay down like four flats on a Cadillac.

-Danielle GU

**From The Beat:** Sounds like you're ready to get yourself out of the system, but we're wondering what plans you have to make that happen.

## I Miss My Family

I miss my family so much. Every time I go to my room, I think about being with my family and the good times we spent together. Some people don't have families so they don't know how it feels to be away from their family.

-Young Lloyd B1

**From The Beat:** What has being away from your family taught you? Before this what is the longest you were away from your family? What will you do when you're free to make sure you get to stay with your family instead of coming to jail to write about them?



**I lived in a  
broken family  
for a few years  
I start wilding  
out so I show  
no fears**

## What I Could Not Do

Me myself am trying to be without so that I can do what I need to do on my own time when I can do it. Being locked up is no fun. You can't leave that room when you need to.

Just the other day I was sick, and I had to use the bathroom. One of the counselors that was there did not let me out of my room. I had to pee in a cup and on the flo' in my room.

So I am trying to tell people that you do not need to be locked in a cell.

-Zoomungus B1

**From The Beat:** Damn, that can't be healthy. Now that you know how it feels to be in The Halls, how are you going to make sure you don't go back to a place that you don't like? Take control of your life, make sure you are not in a position where your freedom can't be taken, and you will never have the problem of not being able to go to the bathroom when you need to.

## In The Future

Five years from now I can picture myself in college trying to get an education and follow my basketball goals. If not, I will like to be a lawyer and take care of my family.

I have a cousin that's a role model that went after them same goals and he did it, so I can do it too. My grandmother said she always wanted me to be somebody, and I'm going to do it so she could be happy.

-Young Lloyd B1

**From The Beat:** Do you think you could try and stick around your cousin more instead of the cats that can take your focus off your goal? If you were a lawyer, what kind of law would you practice?

## I Am Writing About Myself

When I go to court on Friday (I try to pray every chance I get, because when I go back to court), I hope that they will release me on EM. If they do, I am going to try my hardest not to come back inside here — because I cannot keep on getting taken away from my mom and the rest of my family!

When I come back home, if God gives me this chance, I am going to do anything and everything it takes to stay home with my family; because this is not a good place to be. I hope I come back to home and family, because I really learned my lesson. I am going to stay out of trouble — and I am going to go to school everyday and listen to everything that my mom tells me to do!

So, if they let me go, I am going to stay home with my mom, because I cannot keep putting her in a position like this. I know that I am really hurting her. She does everything she can for me, and she deserves better from me.

So that's why I pray to God to let me go back home with her, because I love her so much! And I promise if they let me go back home, I am going to stay home and take it real serious! I really hope that I come home to my mom — please!

-Damon

**From The Beat:** We hope you do get to go home and that you also follow through on all your promises here, not for a few weeks or even a few months — but from now on! Yes, your mother deserves better. You deserve better than this, too; but it's up to you. Even if you go to a program before going home, keep your eyes on the prize! Your life depends on it.

## Ain't That Messed Up

What's up Beat! This is Rocket from Berkeley, just writing to let you know that one of my females just dumped me for one of my homeboys!

Ain't that messed up? Well, I ain't trippin' 'cause females come and go. But anyways, I just want to say wassup to all in the Hall and them foo's at Camp — pimp your program.

-Rocket

**From The Beat:** If you want love that lasts, don't play it fast and loose! Maybe if you let some pain through, you'll change what you do.

## Thoughts

I been in here since Feb. 17 but shhh, I ain't trippin' because another one down, 90 mo' days to go. But everyday I think about the day I get free, and how I'm goin' to handle it because it's a good thing that I'm gettin' out but the bad thing is when I get out I'm steppin' back into the war zone of 2004.

Every ninja wit' dreads is a movin' target on the block. Over the few months I been in here, at least two of the ninjas from my spot then dead and what I'm trippin' off of is how it touched home so quick. But now it's right around the corner from where my nieces and nephews live.

People ask me everyday if I'm going to come back, to tell you the truth it's a 50/50 chance because if one of these ninjas try something it's gon' be problems and that's why I'm not gon' answer that question. I'm not gon' be doing nothing hyphie but I'm not gon' let nobody do nothing funny, feel me?

-Lil' Molly

**From The Beat:** If every ninja with dreads is a target, then maybe you should think about a new hairstyle, feel us? Are your dreads so important to you that you're willing to risk your life over them? Can you find a way to avoid getting caught up in the war zone? Or will you find an excuse to be a part of it? Be smart!

## This Weekend

this weekend i went out and kicked it with my homeboys an' homegirls we drank raced and smoked (not weed, not drugs) i tried to get back with my ex-girlfriend but couldn't do it no way but yeah i still had a lot of fun with my homies so it's all cool with me

-Lil' Thai

**From The Beat:** Show love, generosity, patience and care; and when you least expect it, who knows, she might be there. Meanwhile, drinking and racing cars is not smart or cool, fool!

## Why People Commit Crimes

Let's talk about:

Why do people commit crimes?  
Some people come to jail, because it's no way out. People feel as though they can get away with it.

While others commit crimes because they don't care about people or their feelings.

[To be continued.]

-Shawn

**From The Beat:** This is a great start on explaining why people commit crimes. Maybe you can tell stories or give examples of: (1) no way out, (2) thinking they can get away with it, and (3) they don't care. Which group do you fall into?

## Can I Just Go Home

can i just go home with my family but i cannot because i'm in the hall i'm in the hall waiting to go to camp but i don't want to go but my p o is making me go all i did was messed up two or three okay five days in school and ...

-Homesick

**From The Beat:** Work on your attitude. You get to go home weekends at Camp, but if you go there all negative and then run — you may a chance like Camp again.

## My Life Sucks

All my life, people have put me down in many ways: such as calling me names like "Cootie Boy" — and throwing bottles, rocks and other solid objects at me.

This has been going on since I was six years old. I am now eighteen. That's twelve years of torture from my peers! Everyday when I go to school, someone would beat me up — and they took whatever I had on me that interested them.

My life is a living Hell! My life is a living Hell!

-Caos

**From The Beat:** We look at you and we see more than a victim of abuse; but we believe what you're saying is true (and even if it isn't every single day, we're sure it feels that way). You made it to eighteen, so get your GED. College will be better. Or find a job where you can show that you work hard and you are clever.

## Word to the Wise

It don't matter where you from, it's where you at!

-Kasper

**From The Beat:** So where you at?

## My Prayer

What's up man? It's Lil' Jason! Man, I don't why I'm here, but anyways, I just want to get out of here so I can play football for high school. I have potential but I'm not using it because I'm in here. So I hope the judge give me one more chance to turn my life around.

I want to say Happy Birthday to Nathan. Just pray so I can go home and go back to school. I hope GOD is hearing my prayer — I just want more chance.

-Lil' Jason

**From The Beat:** What are you actually doing so things will get better in your life? Praying is another way of saying "I wish." God can only guide you to a point, but you have to put in work for change. You can't keep doing the same things and expecting different results, it just doesn't work like that.

## What Happened to Us?

There we were, going along with our day-to-day lives, getting along, laughing together — and now this.

It seems that lately we're walking on eggshells around each other. The tension in the air feels so thick, I can almost touch it. And that makes me really mad, because I know how good we can be — together.

If only I knew why we end up in these situations, I'd do everything in my power to prevent this from happening. Where do we go from here? I think we should clear the air and find some common ground, rediscover what brought us together in the first place.

-Rubin

**From The Beat:** The predicament you describe, your emotional response and your suggested solution are all classic — commonplace and intense. Thanks for your articulate piece. Where there's love, there's a way through such difficult times.

## They Call Me Gypsy

at night i think of the shhh that i've done and think of how life is and think of the stuff my mother said don't go gypsy but does the gypsy listen — no but this is the first time i ever got locked up and it's the last because i've thought of the shhh i have done and how the people that i have robbed must have felt — what it is i'll finish this next time gypsy's out

-Gypsy

**From The Beat:** You take us to the touch-point of truth in no time flat! You really are thinking, and it looks like you've decided to change. Imagine that! Gypsy about to get back on track. Props!

## Leaving This Place

Leaving this messed up place hopefully soon. I been here six times and the part I hate most about it is that I got to answer to the next person. As soon I hit the streets I tell myself what to do that's it.

-Domo

**From The Be at:** And the cycle begins. You make your own rules in the streets and then you take it up the you know what. When will it change?

**if they let me go, I am going to stay home with my mom, because I cannot keep putting her in a position like this**



## The Love For You

dedicated to Gen  
the love i let you have was real  
now you let me go and say to my homeboys and homegirls  
that you're not going to let me have a chance with you again in life  
i know maybe you're not going to give me a chance with you  
but i just want you to know that i will always try and try  
until i find the answer that i know is from your heart  
and i know the answer from your heart will be the right one not a lie  
i will always be there for you when you need me gen  
i will always be here for you my ex-girlfriend  
we was together for about three-and-a-half months  
and you said bye to me for some reason i don't know  
but still let's be friends in love okay lil' mama

-Lil' Thai

**From The Beat:** If you really want to be friends with her, don't try so hard to make it more than that. Step back and let her feel as she chooses. Too much pressure will only make you lose her. So be the best friend you can be. Then just wait and see.

## When I Leave This Place

(dedicated to Tishay and Tyresha)  
i'll be glad when i leave this place  
this will be one less experience to be erased  
'cause it is a disgrace  
to black mexican white indian and asian  
this place hurts my pride each time i come here  
but i'll be glad when i leave this place  
i'll be glad when i get to leave this place  
i will see no more of these cronies' faces  
i am leaving this place  
i have no more patience  
i desperately await but i'll be glad  
when i leave this place  
i'll be glad when i leave this place  
there will be no discrimination against all races  
so pace yourself  
this will be the farthest thing from my mind  
when i see the day i shall spend no more time  
and i'll be glad when i leave this place

-Lil' Jepeabo

**From The Beat:** As you get closer and closer to your exit, the anticipation will begin to feel almost like pressure. So stay chill until you're free. Then after that, the key will be to make choices everyday that enable you to stay that way. To stay free you must behave responsibly, 'cause only wisdom beats the system.

## Wake-Up Call

Since last December I have been telling myself that I was never going to put my self in a position like this where I have to stress myself out because I have been getting locked up since '98.

But out of all the times I came, I never thought that I would be keep coming back and forth, in and out. But every time I come back, I get stronger. But this time I know this is my wake up call!

-Lil' Jay

**From The Beat:** This could be it. If you are serious, think of a few plans and support systems. Figure out what gets you caught up (drugs, shady friends, a hustle...?) and make a final decision to cut off from it completely.

## Push Ups

I would try to encourage myself by telling myself to go to school and stay out of trouble. My main problem is that I keep selling drugs and shooting dice, trying to worry about getting the new Jordans and making money.

Sometimes when it all catches up to you, you really try to say I'm not going to do it anymore but it keeps happening. So the way I'm going to encourage myself is by each time I hit a push up, it will remind me that if I keep doing the stuff I do, I'll be hitting push ups all my life.

-Gary

**From The Beat:** Have you tried any other money makin' methods that are legit? It does take time but you'll feel much better knowing that your money is your own money and there's nothing that the law can do to take that from you.

## Advice For Myself

If I were to write a letter to myself, I would tell myself to go to school when I get out of Thunder Road and to not start smoking weed again.

I would also tell myself that whatever happens to me in life, to be strong and use my head and I can get through anything.

-Josh

**From The Beat:** It sounds like you are a very intelligent person who has a good head on their shoulders but just made some wrong decisions. Take your own advice and make a change for the better.

## Youngsta In The Game

Being young in the game  
Trying to get the fame  
Ho'ing on the streets  
Just to put some shoes on his feet  
Getting date after date  
When I'm done I feel raped  
Stripped of pride  
Soon as I get in that ride  
Standing on the corner  
Cold as hell  
Thinking if I go to jail I ain't go' get no bail  
Getting bill after bill  
Getting this skroll  
All for money but girls think this shhh is funny  
The game ain't nothing to play with

-Fireball

**From The Beat:** Unfortunately we hear this story too often. How do you think people will realize that no matter how much money is in it, the game isn't worth it. Life is priceless.

## Hall Life

They call me short; I really met Dave in here  
The Beat's my hope; that thang be talkin' for folks  
I blaze and smoke, the Halls be lockin' up folks  
The foods a joke, man it be killing my throat  
I'm ready to go, man the DA said no  
I be wonderin' do the system be washin' us folks  
We young with hopes, our dreams get smoked like dope  
It's a drought on folks the flends be missing yo' coke  
The judge said no man they gon' give me four  
My son is now out there supplying dope  
I'm cryin' to folks, man, he took the mess up road  
My brother is gone, all because my family is known  
He buried in stones, we can't even talk on the phone  
The Hall's no home, man I just wish I was home  
RIP Ray Ray

-Boog Money

**From The Beat:** What are some of the dreams that you hope to attain? Do you think that this can happen if you use your brain? What are some of the things that you need to change? And, when can all this be arranged? How can you make sure that your life doesn't end in the same tragedy as your brother?

## Ghetto War

I mean this here, I know it's almost over, call in the souljahs, you gotta be ready to bomb back on 'em, know ya enemies position at all times. Where they at and how much power they hold, and how many souljahs they got down to roll with? In the meantime you make yo' money even if you gotta hustle, you better hustle like you hungry for that paper.

These days only ways that pay can save ya, livin' ya life is like a task if you ain't got the cash, some mad at the world as they pull the mask over they face and grab the mag, now what's up with the cash in the bag? Some done wanna pop pop, so drop it take it as a loss and chalk it up. Now you can take ya life and keep on walkin' or be killed for tryin' to deny them a meal. I do what I gotta do, that's keep it real, for people in the 'hood and on the block. I let 'em know they understood but they bustin' shots. You think you livin' raw, well my mentality's war. Paranoia got me sleepin' on the floor watchin' the door.

I'm in this situation where I'm tryin' to stay alive until I die. But anyway we go — we will make it. No way this problem can make me vacant, but you take advantage of ya life why you can. Get rich, kick back and spend ya money, man.

-Lil' Ray

**From The Beat:** Do you think this is the life you always want to live? Where has this life taken you so far? Where will it take you in the end? Where does the desperation for cash come from? What can you do to make a better life for yourself? Do you always wanna live your life paranoid? How can you make it to the top legally?

## It Hurts

man you don't know how it hurts to be without you  
girl it hurts not to be able to touch you  
girl it hurts not to be able to see you  
lil' mama it hurts when i can't talk to you  
lil' mama it hurts when you don't even trust me  
baby it hurts to know that you can't trust yourself  
baby it hurts to know that i haven't and i won't  
cheat on you but you are still jealous  
sweetheart i love you but it hurts me too  
sweetheart i love you but it hurts when you feel  
the same but still feel jealousy and envy when  
i even attempt to talk to another girl  
man it hurts girl it hurts lil' mama it hurts  
baby it hurts sweetheart it hurts  
just like it hurts you it's hurting me too

-Lil' Jepeabo

**From The Beat:** Maybe you both need to do some work on how to treat your love with all the care you'd bestow on a tender infant — and that's a full-time commitment. For that baby's sake and your own, you both need to grow trust in love; 'cause you're the root of you're a new family tree.

## Me And My Boyfriend

Me and my boyfriend we ride 'til the very end  
Me and my boyfriend is the best of friends  
We keep it real with each other

Me and my boyfriend  
When one is down, the other one try to make the other  
you smile

Me and my boyfriend  
We both lived hard lives but we don't let that get to us  
Me and my boyfriend keep each other heads up when  
one another is down

See, I don't know about you and your boyfriend  
But I know about me and mines

Me and my boyfriend do everything together  
And we play fight together  
That's me and my boyfriend

-Dayneisha

**From The Beat:** Dayneisha, you are a lucky girl to have such a good relationship with your boyfriend. What's the secret? We all, if we don't have one now a positive relationship like yours. Keepin' it real is important, trust, caring and sharing. How do you do it, share with us your wisdom.

if i keep doing the stuff i do, i'll be hitting push ups all my life.



### Sideshow

I'm ridin' and sidin' hella hyfie  
 Profilin' wit' the doors open  
 Screaming out what and hella knocking  
 I'm a fox wit' I get out  
 And walk wit' switches  
 Wanna ride wit' me  
 I see 'em and I keep it lit  
 Foxing wit' it  
 A savage and a thick-ass bit  
 Hella hyfie at the sideshow  
 Ready to take flight on a trick  
 I got that dub bottle of Remy  
 And that purple  
 A girl is hella high  
 I think my mind is seeing circles

When 'Chelle on the scene  
 An old school I'm in it  
 Sitting on hub caps  
 Wit' the windows that's tinted  
 Got the purple wit' my coppa  
 so we hyfie fa sho'  
 Hypnotiq wit' the Remy  
 Got us openin' doors  
 I fox wit' it and if you think you got it  
 Come ride it  
 Figure-eighting sideways  
 Foxing wit' it on Fridays  
 We hella high  
 Switching lanes  
 Trying to get to these parties  
 We hella high  
 Keeping up  
 Wit' the ninjas on Harleys

(chorus)  
 Got it crackin' at the sideshow all night  
 I been gettin' straight major dough  
 Sideways through the streets  
 Ridin' old schools on vogues  
 Yeah . . .  
 Got it crackin' at the sideshow all night  
 I been gettin' straight major dough  
 Sideways through the streets  
 Slidin' old schools on vogues  
 Ridin' . . .

-Michelle

**From The Beat: This is a nice flow you got here; unfortunately, it may not flow as nice as you wrote. But you know that we had to edit a lot of this piece to make it appropriate for The Beat. You have a very creative spirit. What is it exactly that you are talking about in this flow. Take us on a journey into your thoughts. We want to see how far you can take it. You're a smart girl, teach us something, besides partying at the sideshow.**

### Surgery

I just got surgery in my mouth and it don't feel good. My mouth is swollen. I will be going home soon if I am cool. Ninjas be acting like they hard and can't do nothin'.

-Ray

**From The Beat: Sorry about the surgery. Being hard is more like being foolish, huh? Courageous people rise above all this. We believe you can be courageous.**

### Doing Time In The Hall

Behind these four walls, waiting for the staff to come let us out so we can go play some basketball with all these dudes. Sometimes I don't even like going to school, rather go to my room then be around these same dudes and eating this same nasty county food.

But I ain't going to get into all that while I'm doing this time because I'll be back out there on the shine. They can't keep me for all my time.

-Lil' Shawn

**From The Beat: Nice writing, Shawn. You are right — they can't keep you. You are the one who keeps you in or out. When will you realize that you can shine without being out on the grind? You are capable of so much more.**

### In Here Doing Time

My name is Lay-Lay, I been locked up for eleven and a half months, I did four months in the Hall. Then I went to the "Y" for three months.

I been back from the "Y" for four and a half months, and they trying to send me to Nevada for eighteen more months. I probably won't leave until July, so basically I'm in here doing time. Ain't nothing I could do about it but keep my head up and stay solid. This little time ain't nothing, because at least I know one day I'm gonna get out, but my uncle Dep will never be back.

RIP- Dep, Nunu, Nick, Sam G, Pistol P.

-Lil' Lay-Lay

**From The Beat: Keep your head up. You got your whole life ahead of you. Don't even trip, eighteen months ain't nothing. You have a lot to look forward to on the outs. Once you get out, are you worried that you're going to get caught up again? How you going to make sure that you don't come back? One suggestion, don't let the time do you, use your time wisely, prepare for freedom.**

### Going Back

LS: Lil' Shawn, DD: Dirty-De

DD: What's up with you bra-bra?

S: Nothing just holding it down in this 2004 life.

DD: That's what I'm talking about, keep it lit!

LS: You already know bra-bra how it is with them.

DD: Man they don't want it. They just talking. They ain't bangin' the noise.

LS: You already know bra-bra, we don't have to get into all that. They don't want it with us.

DD: I feel what you are saying bra-bra, but these ninjas are out of pocket. They are talking to me like they got some type of power.

LS: Don't trip bra-bra, these ninjas is some cowards.

DD: They don't want no problems. This is Dirty-De and Shawn and to keep it real with you bra-bra, I'm trying to stunt and shine.

LS: Bra-bra what these suckas really don't know, these ninjas think I got time for this easy ass crime.

DD: They can't keep us bra-bra for a long time because these crimes don't match my time.

LS: Bra-bra one thing about you, you ain't never lied. I give us about a couple of years, we will be back on the grind.

-Lil' Shawn and Dirty-De

**From The Beat: You two may be down for a while but why do you have plans to return to what can get you locked up again? What is up with that? You two are capable of so much more, something legit. As far as the funk that goes around in there, how can you stay smart and keep to yourself? Others may try to start stuff and say stuff to you but why bite? Why do you feel you need to keep proving yourselves? We hope you two can start bringing each other up, instead of further down into incarceration.**

### They Can't Beat'cha, Tyresha

(a letter to myself)

keep your head up  
 and stay out of a hater's face  
 you have something special about you  
 that they're tryin' to take away  
 but you're going to walk on the clouds  
 like you're the sun shining every day  
 you keep a smile on your face  
 and you know yourself  
 they can't get in your way  
 praying every day and night  
 to keep these haters out of sight  
 if you know what I mean it's all right  
 and you know they can't beat'cha  
 'cause you're tyresha

-Tyresha

**From The Beat: We hope as you read your letter in this issue, you enjoy reading it as much as we do! 'Cause this is a straight wonderful poem! Thanks for showin'**

### Change?

Man where I'm from ninjas just don't care. I would like to change, but it's so hard to walk a straight line, but you can't because it's so much negativity around me, you can't.

I ain't no fake person who will sit up and lie and say "Man, I ain't gon' do this and that," and get out and do the same thing, because you don't know.

Right now I'm going to Camp Sweeny, for six to nine months, hopefully I run a good program. When I get out, man I'm going to try and stay cool and calm.

-Davie

**From The Beat: Good for you Davie. How do you plan to run a good program? What do you think will be tougher, your program at camp or staying out of trouble on the outs? Lastly, you have a lot of work to do, there is much more to succeeding than staying cool and calm! Hit the books! Make wise decisions especially about who you associate with!**

### Dear Abbas

How are you holding up in there? All you need to do is pray and stick to your religion. Don't let other people bring you down. The only person you should fear is Allah. And the only one's judgment you should care about is Allah's judgment.

Ignore the people who get on your nerves and don't let them get to you. Also, patience is a virtue. When you get out and hopefully you don't fall back into the same traps.

Use your time in hear wisely, read books, meditate and plan your future but don't forget Allah might have a different plan than yours.

Never lose faith!

-Abbas

**From The Beat: This is an important letter to yourself because this is the recipe to motivate you, to get you through difficult times and to eventually lead you to your goals.**

**Ignore the people who get on your nerves and don't let them get to you.**

### Saying Goodbye

This will be my last time writing The Beat from the Hall, 'cause I'm getting out tomorrow. I'm going back to my placement in San Francisco, the Walden House. I'm really ready for a change, so hopefully this program will help me.

I just wanna thank some people. Ms. Wadud for being not only staff, but a friend; I'm go' keep in touch and not go back to Tip. Ms. Westbrook for being my momma even though you never claimed me, but I am yo' child; and to BT, Elco, Vanessa, and Roach stay up — y'all know you guys are my potnas. Be good, stay out the streets 'cause they go' break you. These ninjas don't love us. That's why we gotta show 'em it's nothing.

I gotta go, and last but not least thanks to The Beat. I'll see you when I come get a job.

-Fireball

**From The Beat: Fireball, we are so proud of you. We really hope you make it through your placement. We know you are ready. You've touched a lot of people out there with your writing. There's a lot of us out here supporting you. We want to see you make it. You're so strong. See you at Walden House. We love ya'. Sincerely —The Beat Within**

**you're going to walk on the clouds  
 like you're the sun shining every day**

## Locked Away

Lock me away and throw away the key  
When I get out I'm still gon' be out on these streets  
It doesn't matter; it's the way I was raised  
In California, the heart of the Bay  
Now I'm locked up inside of juvenile hall  
In my room all day staring at four cell walls  
Thinking of my case and when I get out  
I'm gonna be back on the block, reppin', no doubt  
My mind got older and it's growing older  
I hate it in here, always looking over my shoulder...  
All because my minds filled with frustration of being  
locked away.

-Lil' Gato

**From The Beat:** We feel the same frustration you feel when a young man writes that they don't want out of this life but at the same time he doesn't want to be locked up. When will you see that repping equals eventual incarceration? If you do not want to stop being in a gang, can't you slow it down? The "can't stop, won't stop" brainwashing is a lie. You CAN stop or at least slow it down.

## Confessions / Still Burnin'

Why I never cheated  
Why I never lied  
Now LaLa saying bye-bye  
And you don't understand  
Why it's about time  
I left you alone  
Now you really could get gone  
Now you missing me  
Wanting me  
What's wrong  
Couldn't be faithfully?

-Lil' LaLa

**From The Beat:** Sometimes when relationships end, we don't know exactly what went wrong. Being honest and faithful, should be expected. If you don't have these elements in your relationship, then it is doomed from the beginning. We all walk away from relationships with something gained, something we can learn from, something we can take to our next relationship. What did you learn?

## To The Brothas

To the brothas in the Hall,

Man, I see what you go through but being a woman isn't that easy either. We go through things too, just like men do sometime. We have to put up with your stuff and we get fed up sometimes, but I still love ya'.

Put us in your shoes sometimes, but brothas, if you have a good woman, keep her — don't let her slip away.

-Lil' LaLa  
**From The Beat:** It's good when we can relate to others. Sometimes we need to get in each other's shoes. Just to get a fresh perspective. We all have problems, struggles and situations in life that aren't easy. If we can understand a little bit more about where each of us are coming from, then we would all get along much better. What do you think?

## Seen You Again

Seen you again for the first time in a long time  
It seems like I've wasted my time

I'm still missing you  
Don't know what to do  
It feels like I'm losing you  
I'm mad at myself

'Cause with or without you I'm going through hell  
Hoping you'll change

But no matter what I'm going through pain  
Seeing you with another girl, feeling mad  
'Cause I'm hella mad

It seems like you don't care  
No matter what, I'm still going to be there

-Lil' LaLa

**From The Beat:** Relationships are really hard sometimes. We all need to take time out and reflect on who this person is that I am in love with? Am I being treated with respect? Does this person love me as much as I love him/her? It's a great feeling to be in love, but it can hurt too. Do you want to continue to care about someone that causes you so much pain?

## I'm Tired Of This Place

I'm tired of being in here stressin' hella damn much. I'm tired of sitting up in here in this place called Alameda County Juvenile Hall. I'm tired of sitting in my little cell looking up and down, side to side, front and back praying, crying, stressing in my room all by myself, trying to get out of here.

I pray to God. This is what I said: Please God, get me out of here. I'm tired of staying up in here. I'm tired of eating this food. So all I can say is this — I'm tired of this place called Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

So will I ever be free from this place, from this cold, dirty place. I thought to myself, why did I come here? God didn't tell me to come here or my family, it was me. And when I was out there on the street getting money walking up and down the street, a dude come up to me, try to jack me. I almost got smoked just for prostituting, trying to get money on the track — I almost got killed just for all that.

I thought I was cool. I thought I was all that, but it wasn't coo' at all. But at that time, I wasn't thinking at all. All I was thinking was money.

-Lil' C

**From The Beat:** So, where are you at now, mentally? Back then you were only thinking of money. Now, you are tired of everything. What are you not tired of? Where do you see your life going? What are you thinking about now?

## Stepping Back In Time

If I could change myself for the better I would step back into time and change everything I did. I would go to college and run track again and just be cool and stay out the streets and kick it with my lil' bro and my lil' sis and get a job in between.

If I could change me, I would stop everything I'm doing, like kicking it, so much but I'll still drink and kick it with my wife and keep it real, but I'll just stop all this drama and gangbanging. But you know, I'm addicted to thuggin' and I can't stop the feeling. Man, it just feels hella good but like I was saying I will change sooner or later.

-Domo

**From The Beat:** We hope you change sooner than later. The earlier you change, the easier it will be. 'Cause we know you heard that saying, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Change now while you're still young and able, we hear all too often from men living within the prison system who wished they would have changed while in juvenile hall.

## This Broke County

This broke-ass county — I hate Alameda County. Broke-ass Hall, being in here. I want to go. Dumb fake-ass food, all I want is the County snack.

Oh, I want to say what's up to Queazy and Lil' Jason. When you get out don't come back. It's not cool. The staff always want to give you room time or an hour, always saying "Talking is dead," seven-minute shower.

RIP Snoopy aka Miguel, RIP Ronnie.

-Lil' LaLa

**From The Beat:** Hmm, broke-ass county? What would you change about the Hall, besides you not being there? If you could design a program for yourself, or the girls in there with you, what would it be like?

## Cycles

The only cycles in my family are every one on my dad's side stays locked up and the suckas on my moms side be some suckas and let people run them over.

But where I am from you can't be no punk, you have to stand tall. My mom's side only takes place in my skin, but pops side takes place in my heart.

-Luni

**From The Beat:** Some people aren't meant to be fighters because that's just not who they are, but it doesn't make them punks and if they're your family you certainly shouldn't disown them. Don't get us wrong, you shouldn't let anyone take advantage of you but there are other options in resolving conflicts besides fighting. Besides, you'll never know, you might need that side of the family one day, especially if everyone on your dad's side calls jail home.

## Don't Stop For No Cop

This is Sticky. I see a cycle in my life. My dad got locked up so that's why I'm here — my life cycle.

I'm going to change the cycle up and if I don't there always homies in the Hall.

So for all the homies, if I don't be back, stay up.

How I'm going to change the cycle is by being more coo' 'bout my stuff. So that's my plan — just don't stop for no cop. Stay smashing, but homies get off all this PO shhh 'cause they got us twisted up in here and out there.

-Sticky

**From The Beat:** Not stopping for a cop is no way to change the cycle up. It just adds more charges on you when you do get caught. Have you thought about just going legit and forgetting about the smashing? There is a part that wants to change, yet, there is this tragic side to you that's willing to throw your freedom away, then you wake up in a cell, with the possibility of never getting released? Is that what you want?

## Full of Fright

it means it is hard  
at times  
and nobody  
is there  
to help you  
but in the end  
you find a way  
to make it

-Jordan

**From The Beat:** Yes, we understand what you're saying about fear — and finally finding a way!

## Lightweight Broken

The family that I got, is lightweight broken, because we don't really respect each other — and that's what it takes! So if you don't respect yourself, you can't respect others.

The biggest thing I hate, is when he tries to demand I do this or that — because he thinks I got to do everything he says! But that's not how it goes down, 'cause I'm a bad ass. And that's probably why I'm here.

-Daniel

**From The Beat:** Don't let your bad attitude toward him (is he your dad?), create the same relationship between you and the world. You're right that acting like a "badass" is why you're here. Yet you're so much more than your anger at him.

**I'm going to change the cycle is by being more coo'**



## They Don't Really Know Me

Man, there's this staff on the unit that they just switched me to and he be getting me mad. When I went on the unit he tried to tell me what nationality I am, and it got me hella mad. He tried to say I'm white, but I'm half Nicaraguan and half Italian.

Then he told me, "Stop lying to me. You're not Nicaraguan." That just got me hella mad, feel me. To all the Nicoyas and Italians, stay up. This homeboy's out till next week.

-Soprano

**From The Beat:** The first thing we have to say is that instead of getting so mad, you should just dismiss it as ignorance. Americans think people from certain countries "look a certain way," and when you don't look like their prejudices (ignorance), they spout off. The second thing, though, is to question the whole concept of "white" "black" and "brown." After all, where do you think white people come from? We're sorry to tell you, but they come from Nicaragua, Italy, England, Argentina, and all over the world. In America, particularly, we are all so mixed up and criss-crossed racially and ethnically, that is practically meaningless to say someone is white. The only real significance these terms have is in how some people treat other people based on their power and their ignorance. We say, just shine it on.

## Alcohol runs through my dad's side of the family, and violence runs through my mom's side of the family.

### Organized

Me, I am from Michuacan. I came from a people called the Tarascans. We are a people organized for war. We fight with axes and knives made out of copper.

-Alv

**From The Beat:** Do the Tarascans still organize for war, or is this from the old times? Do you think you're in the situation you're in right now because you're a warrior from Michuacan?

## My Blood

Alcohol runs through my dad's side of the family, and violence runs through my mom's side of the family. I do both the same things.

I drink alcohol and I do violence. It runs through my blood. On my mom's side of the family, they do the same things I do. I got cousins and uncles who go to jail for beatin' up people to death, and I found myself doing the same thing.

I thought my life was going to be different.

-Tongan

**From The Beat:** Why did you think your life would be different? What went wrong? Do you think that you have no choice in the life you lead, but that you are forced to follow in the footsteps of your uncles and cousins? Doesn't this make you a follower and not a leader? Was there a point in your life when things could have taken a different path for you? Is it too late? Do you imagine yourself spending the rest of your life locked up, or do you have other plans?

## Fate

Keep shhhh to yo' selfish

Even though you should've dealt it.

What you doin'? Is you stupid?

Walkin' around showin' peeps love

Shhhh, that ain't coo' kid.

Yo' patnah, you livin' in hell

That there, that's just another place.

Place for you to die,

Place for you to cry,

Another place to sigh,

Another place to fry or get high,

A place for love and a place for hate.

The day you come up,

My ninja, that's just another date.

-Fo'Thirty

**From The Beat:** What do you mean it "ain't coo'" to show your peeps love? Why not? We think showing love is one of the coolest things in the world — and especially in a place designed for tears. We wish you could translate this poem into prose (like essay writing) so that we could understand all that you are trying to say.

## CYA-Bound

I was a youngster fighting the older homies for calling me "youngster." I grew up. I caught all kinds of cases. I've had 187, but after two weeks my rival's life support brought him back to life, and the charge was dropped to attempted murder and gang enhancement. I was only turning fifteen. I beat that case and only did two years in ROP.

A couple of weeks after I turned seventeen, I caught a prison case with some older homies. I had four assaults with deadly weapons with gang enhancements. That was sixteen years in state prison. I was getting tried as an adult, I beat the case in eight months.

I was out two months and caught two new cases. I had an assault with a deadly weapon, two gang enhancements, and all kinds of charges. I finally lost this case. Now I'm going to CYA. I'll get my first parole date when I'm 21, and I have the max time of sixteen years. If the parole board hears of fights and gang activities, I'll be transferred to the pen.

I ain't the lil' homie or "youngster" anymore, I've done grown and earned my stripes, and still have a thirst to earn many more. Is CYA and the pen my future? When I was a "youngster," I was scared of CYA, but for some reason I'm not. I want to pick up hella education and do other things there, maybe that's why.

-Boxer

**From The Beat:** We don't know quite how to respond to you, Boxer. It seems that nothing the system can throw at you makes you slow down or stop. You've had your chances, and you've blown them. Is there anything that would make you give up this life that has you enslaved by the system? Now that you're on your way to the next level of imprisonment, we hope you honor your commitment to take advantage of whatever educational and vocational opportunities they offer, because you'll need them if you don't plan to spend the rest of your life as a slave to the man! Are you afraid of anything? What?

## Raised In The System

I grew up raised in here from eleven to sixteen, graduating from E- unit to C-unit. Now I am in D-unit. All this precious time thrown away to the dirt as if my life was a piece of trash.

Now as a sixteen-year-old, I sit in a room facing four white walls, a 9' by 12'. Room, over 500 white blocks that try to take me down, try to make me spend more time in the room.

I have wasted my life. I try to look back and see what good have I done to my community. What good have I done for anyone? Nothing! All I did was gang bang, throw it down for the cause.

Man, I sit here trying to tell kids stop coming here. They look at me as if they can tell all I gone through. The fact is they think it's my first time be in here trying to teach me knowledge.

Man, shut up. You have not gone through what I gone through, facing this white wall already for almost one year. Been here since Aug 27, '03 — now May 28, '04

-Juice

**From The Beat:** For someone as young as you, you have already experienced a whole lot, and most of it has been negative. We wish you weren't here. We wish you hadn't been raised in the Hall. But that's in the past (mostly). You have to start looking to the future, because that's where your life will change. We don't believe you've wasted your life. Everything in life is useful to prepare you for what comes later, even the negative things. If, after all that, you just gave up altogether, that would be a waste. But if you plan to stand on your own two feet, independent of the system, then nothing has been wasted.

## Yellin', Yellin', Yellin'

In my family all that goes down in my family is yellin', yellin', yellin'. All my mom does is yell at me. She yells at me for the stupidest stuff. And I yell back. That's why I have been in group homes.

"Family problems" if they funny put me in a group home — 'cause of that they might as well put everybody in group homes 'cause of family problems.

-Nelly

**From The Beat:** What's all the yelling about? While it's not true that everybody has family problems, it does seem that the group home isn't going to help with the root of the problem, which is the relationship you have with your mother. What do you think should happen? What do you think could help your situation?



## Forget The Cops

I'm back in the Beat, who would have thought, I'd keep messin' up on the street, and keep getting caught.

Now I sit in my cell, thinking and dreamin', I wake up in my room kickin' and screamin', from the frustration of disappointment and how I let myself down, haunting my dreams makes me beat myself down.

Now I sit and I wonder how I ever let these drugs take me under,

but I'm not trippin', I'll be back after summer. Last time I was here I said, "I'm not comin' back,"

I was even doing pretty good — even though I was thizzin' and drinkin', I was on the right track.

The scandalous cops won't leave me alone, they seem to just love breakin' my back.

Forget the cops.

-Heath Kliff

**From The Beat:** We feel your frustration, but aren't you just handing the cops a ticket to ride when you think "thizzin' and drinkin'" are part of being on the right track? When you're sitting in your cell, what are you thinking and dreaming about? The problem with your solution ("FTC") is that the cops have tremendous power over your life if you give them the opportunity. So, you can say "Forget the cops," but in the end, you pay the price because it is the cops who get to forget you!



## A Lot . . .

A lot of shhh is going on right now. Not knowing when I'm going to Camp. Thinking about my family 'cause my great-grandma is leaving and I don't know if I'm gonna see her again. A lot of homeboys getting locked up — some going to Camp, some going to the Y — but keep your heads up homies.

Things happen for a reason even though it's shady life is a game; you have to know how to play it 'cause if you don't play it right, the game is gonna play you . . . and it's all bad when that happens 'cause it's hard to get out of it.

-Smokey

**From The Beat:** You do have a lot goin' on in your life — too much to be dropping the cliché about life being a game and knowing how to play it. For all the people we know who call life a game, none have won it, and what's a game without winners? Is all that you're facing a reason to look at the way that you're living? Why'd you give up your freedom? Is the lifestyle worth getting locked up, maybe not seeing your great-grandma again?

## Dear Larry,

Damn man, it's been a while since you been hangin' with everyone, but see what I told you — that hangin' with them fakes, phonies, square-asses would get you. Remember how moms used to get on you about listening to her, but naw — you wanted to be hard-headed and do what you wanted to do and be your own person and see it got your ass locked up for how long now — what? — eleven months, got two months left.

Man, you need to wake up and see the bigger picture because life ain't what it always seems, because the shhh you did and used to do was stupid and not worth it. I know it's short, but you need to get your ass out and stay out and not end up in bigger places. Yeah, you need to watch your back and stay away from, like I said before, the fakes, phonies, and square-asses, 'cause when you mess with them you know where you will end up, and remember the saying, "Never let a ninja get to you."

-Youn1

**From The Beat:** What's the obsession with the "fakes, phonies, and square-asses"? Did they get you in trouble? Did they make you do all the stuff you now realize is stupid, the things that got you locked up? We feel much of what you say, but it seems like you have an urge to deal with your frustration by turning it outwards towards others instead of towards yourself and your actions.

## Caesar Chavez

Civilization  
Ending this crisis  
And fighting for what you believe  
Sorrow for all those who got it  
Always working so hard  
Rarely would you see farm workers  
Get paid a lot . . .

Chicano  
Hard-headed  
And didn't give up in what they believe  
Vulnerable children had to work, too  
E  
Z

-Kaho

**From The Beat:** One of the stupidest things associated with the gang life we see so much of is how Caesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers have been claimed as a symbol of gang life. Chavez was a great American, a great Chicano, who was inspired by the love of his people and a fierce sense of the injustices being committed against them to give his life fighting for a real cause. This piece is way more true to Caesar Chavez than any of those others will ever be. What happened to the "E" and "Z"?

## Out In Five Days

I'm about to get out in five days. I can't wait to be home, eat some real food. First thing I'm going to go to the taqueria, get myself a super burrito with a cold Coke.

The things I'm worried or tripping about is about going back to the negative stuff like the drugs, go with the homies and do the gang life. It's like if I go with the homies, I'm going to be smoking or doing something bad. I just want to keep it cool, not get locked up and go to County.

I'm a be off probation so I don't got to trip about POs, so it's going to be hard to stay out of them drugs. I hate being locked up — people talk lots of shhh so I'm a stay out. Al rato. To all the homies here, stay up.

-Kasper

**From The Beat:** Hopefully this issue will make its way to you on the outs, and we hope you read it accompanied by the fattest burrito on the planet — carnitas? carne asada? — just make sure not to spill any on The Beat, aight? We know the challenges you're facing. Not only are the drugs tempting you, but the gang life is hot out there right now, and we know your homies are going to come calling. If they're real homies, they'll understand that you want to keep it on the down low. You neglected to mention in this piece that you just graduated high school — is college in your future?

## The System Is Getting Bored

Does the crime fit my punishment? Hell no, because the thing I did to come here wasn't a crime. I broke curfew and I got forty-five days. It don't seem like a long time because it's not.

But come on — a month and a half for coming home a few hours late? It seems like the system is getting bored because they're lockin' people up for just about anything nowadays.

-Curfew

**From The Beat:** It does seem harsh — ridiculous even — that you're doing forty-five days for breaking curfew. If you were the PO in your case, what do you think the appropriate consequence for breaking curfew would be?

## Free

I sit here and I see the birds  
I watch them fly free  
wishin' it could be me  
Everybody wants me to be like them  
but I go' be like me  
the one and only Lil' Bree  
One day you'll see I'll be free  
I'm not go' let the system work me  
I'm go' work the system  
'cause I'm go' only be me  
Yes I know it's my fault  
I sit here and watch the birds  
watch them fly free  
but you'll see sooner not later  
that's gonna be me  
the one and only Lil' Bree.

-Lil' Mami

**From The Beat:** We hope to see you up there flying with the birds soon, or at least out here looking at 'em, but one thing we're don't understand is how you're going to play the system. Has anyone ever successfully played the system?

I sit here  
and I see the birds  
I watch them fly free  
wishin' it could be me

## Jail Time Risks

It's filled with drug dealin' and thug killin'  
an' for da money everybody is willin'  
I want peace, but realistically that won't happen on these cold streets  
An' da only way we make money is stayin' on a paper chase  
an' hope I don't catch another case  
But that's how it is  
taking these jail time risks

-Eti

**From The Beat:** One way to ensure peace won't happen is to stay steady fighting against it, staying on the paper chase and continuing to take those jail time risks. Is there anything more important than money? Where's your money now? Are you wearing the finest fits, riding the best car? The money might be slower in the legit game, but at least you get to use it instead of dreaming about it while locked in a room wearing county clothes.

## Court (Back From Court)

Well, what's up? I went to court today, 28 May. I had to admit to some charges. My PO recommended to the judge CYA 'til I turn 25, but I got court in three weeks — on 18 June — so I can get sentenced to ROP.

My other homie is getting Camp. They say Camp is not good for me 'cause I will do bad and I'm higher than everyone in Camp. Everyone is happy I'm going to ROP. I'm not 'cause I wanted to get out, go see my loved ones.

Well, I got my papers and homies read it and I proved them wrong, but when I get out — I will get out when I'm eighteen in 2006. Well, to all my homies and everyone, I know I love all you guys. Be good, stay up. I will miss you guys.

-Spooky

**From The Beat:** We understand that you want to be back on the outs, back with your family, but going from potentially facing Pen time to ROP is why some people seem to be happy you're on your way there. How will you approach your time at ROP? How can you use the time you have there to prepare yourself for your return to the outs?



## What's The Point?

The cycle in my family is gettin' money. All of my uncles have been big figgas and they always get hated on. They always get put out the game.

What's the point of killing someone for no reason? I can see if you're going to rob them and kill them, but why try to rob someone and they don't have shhh to give, you kill them. It's no point.

I'm just trying to live life for the fullest and don't get popped. I'd rather get hit by a bus or something than let a street punk put me out the game. But I can't say I'll break that cycle because I don't know what God has in store for me, but I'm a stay gangsta'd out to my last breath.

-A-Dog

**From The Beat:** We hope you don't get hit by a bus or get popped. What about living to a ripe old age, chillin' on the porch as an old man, holdin' court with all the youngsters at your feet? Seriously, why take the chances of staying "gangsta'd out"? Why tempt fate, especially if you know that other family members have played the game and lost?

## No More

Stop claimin' the game  
and you won't have so much pain  
Do you know what I claim?  
I claim me  
I'm not willing to give up my life  
for nobody  
'cause they may not be there for me  
Yeah, I know you think  
she don't know what she sayin'  
you right —  
I just know I lost a lot of people  
in these so-called 'gangs'  
I believe once you jump in  
you neva come out alive  
but I can't say no more  
But I could say  
you will make it alive  
if you give it up now  
Don't think twice  
never think twice on this.

-Lil' Mami

**From The Beat: The most powerful line above is when you say that you claim yourself, because you imply that those who claim a color or a set deny themselves. Why do you think so many people get into gangs? How did you realize that you cared for yourself enough to stay out of the gang life?**

## Ask Me

A lot of people ask me if I'm ever gonna change the life that I'm living, and all I could tell them is I'm gonna try to change. But I never know what's gonna happen the next day.

-Soprano Villain

**From The Beat: There's not much here to comment on, SV. What we'd like to know is just how you plan to "try to change." Just saying it is not enough. What will you do differently?**

## Through Cell Bars

As I wind my day down to its end  
I look out toward the nightlife sky  
One star is all I see  
through my cell bars and tops of trees  
If I'm lucky I'll see two  
but definitely not the moon  
The wonders of the world  
so often taken for granted  
The beauties we've been blessed with  
from the universe to the seas  
now the sight I had taken from me  
What I miss the most  
is looking in the sky  
seeing all the stars  
with the moon by their side  
through blessed blue eyes of mine.

-Giggles

**From The Beat: There is too much beauty in the world to be locked up away from it, straining to catch a glimpse of the stars through a cell window. Will this experience of being locked away from the beauties we're blessed with be enough to keep you on the outs, running on the straight and narrow, being out under the moon and stars instead of wishing you could see them?**

## Too Much

This heart of mine  
hurt so much  
Can't sleep at night  
can't even think no mo'  
It's just like Bow Wow say:  
"Can't sleep  
can't think  
can't nothin' at all"  
but I know I have to stand tall  
I can't fall this time  
to me  
time is a crime  
there's not one place I went  
without doin' some kind of time  
They go say  
CYA

it's time to leave the Bay  
no more makin' me pay  
'Cause now I look like a fool in the game  
but I ain't ashamed  
It's my fault I have all this pain  
in my little heart  
I sit here and drink the milk  
from my little cart  
thinkin'  
life can stop you  
just like a dart.

-Lil' Mami

**From The Beat: Life can stop you like a dart, but over time you can get yourself back going again. Why is it that everywhere you go you do some sort of time? What is it that keeps bringing you down? If it's your fault that you have all this pain, how can you begin to let some of it go away, replacing it instead with goals and dreams and maybe even some joy?**

## Fun Time

I feel like a G  
'cause you know me  
with my dark blue pants and my orange T  
and my want-to-be Nikes  
Everybody tryin' to write me  
'cause they wanna know what's up  
'cause I was out there grindin' them MP3s  
So you can just holla at me  
drop by my "projects"  
that unit is where I be  
where we be gettin' hifie  
With our green, blue, purple, yellow, orange  
T-shirts  
we got our moneymakers up in  
administration  
we be ready for a competition  
we got a one hundred dollar bill  
so we be poppin' our colla  
we be lookin' for canteen  
but you know that's a treasure hunt  
but we got a hump in our back  
when you say "Come on,  
ay ay now, let's go."  
you know I got to go  
Like they said  
"Blow it out yo' ass"  
With two fingers in the air  
I got to go  
back to my projects . . .  
just playin'.

-Lil' Mami

**From The Beat: Poppin' your collar in X unit? There must be a whole hustle goin' on over there that we don't know about. What's it going to take to find a better neighborhood to hang in — from X unit back to the girls' unit, and eventually to your own unit on the outs [wearing real instead of wannabe Nikes]?**

## Cry

Sometimes I feel like I wanna cry  
but then I realize I'm all alone  
so I start thinking it would be better if I would die  
Sometimes life sucks so bad  
I just burst out in tears  
I've been contemplating  
with is the worst of my fears

-Nicole

**From The Beat: Contemplating what? What is it that you think about that leads to the worst of your fears? Life does suck sometimes, but the key is in the prefix of that word — some. It doesn't suck all of the time. What are some of the times life has been good for you?**

## Do you know what I claim? I claim me

## The Truth Has Surfaced

I've been incarcerated for three months now — countless pre-trials, days of illusion — but finally the truth has surfaced. After all this time of not knowing what's going to happen, a bit of good news has come to my attention.

The accusations are false due to an abundant amount of evidence. Now what was once a clouded vision of my future is now so very clear, as my innocence is shining out for all to see. I have many new goals, and a much different perspective of life and how I'm going to live it.

So as my next court day is set, it should be my last, and it will be the end to this nightmare of mine, as it showed how in the so-called perfect world, many people are jealous and corrupted. Too many bring others down who are on the right track.

-Lim

**From The Beat: It's hard enough being incarcerated; being locked up for something you didn't do must make it even harder. However, you found a way to turn this negative experience — one that you shouldn't have had — into a positive, setting new goals and gaining a new perspective on life. What is your new perspective on life? What are the new goals to which you aspire?**

## Back From Court

Yeah yeah, what up Beat?

Well, I just got back from court and damn, I'm heated! They playin' me for real. First, my PO says, "Yeah, CYA," but that's not what got me mad. It's the fact that the judge won't hurry up and get it over with, feel me? 'Cause the judge said, "Yeah, I think that CYA is appropriate for you," then he goes and says, "Pretrial."

I'm like, "What the hell! Just send me! You think you sick and shhh, so just get it over wit'," and he said, "Nah, pretrial." Well yeah, I'm heated.

I came back to the unit for a second and I was about to take flight on this fool but I maintained, you know. Well, I ain't in the mood all that much and I really don't want to go to X unit, so I'm a just keep it coo' for a minute. Just be coo' and don't get in no extra shhh than you already in. And to all that's headin' to the Y, don't let them try to scare you. Feel me? It ain't shhh. Aight then.

-Jacob Da Jeweler

**From The Beat: Well, it's cool that you managed to maintain your anger and frustration, and we hope that you're able to continue to do so. You bring up a complaint that we hear often, that the trial process takes too long and that people do too much dead time while waiting to be transferred to their placement. Why do you think it takes so much time? Do you think that maybe it takes so long because they want to make sure the process is fair, even to a fault? What would you do to make it better? Why do you think time in the Hall doesn't count as time served?**

**I have many new goals, and a much  
different perspective of life  
and how I'm going to live it.**



## Being Adopted

Sometimes I wonder who my real parents are  
Could they be married, separated, or one possibly  
a famous star

Why would they leave?  
Is it something I did?  
I know that drugs got in the way  
But I was just a kid.

Knowing that my adopted parents aren't blood  
Keeps my mind racing with the thought that  
my mom just left me in the mud.

I hate school assignments that have to do with birth.  
because there is a pain that grows inside me  
like a never ending girth

I love who my parents are now  
But sometimes it makes me sad  
that I'm never going to know who's my  
biological dad.

My whole situation leaves me completely  
confused

The fact that even before I was born  
I was drug abused

The entire thought, truly hurts inside.  
But I'm proud to say I was adopted  
and have nothing to hide.

-Sisters Forever

**From The Beat: What a powerful piece! You have been through a lot at a young age, and while it is sad to read that not knowing who your biological parents are has put you through a lot of stress, on the other hand it is inspiring to read that your adopted parents were good enough to make you feel proud of being adopted. We are curious though, do you think that life would be different for you now if your real parents had raised you? If so how?**

## In My World.....

Damn, My world was all messed up, but I was able to turn it around and get back on track. Now I'm one phase away from getting eldership.

I plan to complete program and move on with my life. I think about even one day I'll be able to start my own business, get enrolled in college, major in acting and math.

-Angela

**From The Beat: We know that out of all people aspiring to the same thing as you, you have a bigger chance at success simply based on the determination and positivity of your attitude. What kind of business do you want to start? Stay focused Angela, and don't give up on those Spanish lessons you told us about either.**

**I think about even one day I'll be able to start my own business, get enrolled in college, major in acting and math.**

## Injustices

My world keeps on spinning, never seeming to stop  
But I look inside and see what I've got

Insane, crazy but happy instead  
I deserve my feeling of true emotion to be read.

I look through an eyeglass to see who I am but see  
A picture of my future instead

My life seems to change day by day  
seeing that life will never stay the same.

-Auntie Em

**From The Beat: Hey Auntie Em, your feeling of true emotion is gonna be read by more people than you probably ever imagined. We hope that you realize you are not alone, that many people share in the burdens of your struggle.**

## Dear Brianna

Dear Brianna,

You have come so far

Four months down the road, I appreciate who you are.

Looking at my past, realizing what I thought I knew

Now in the present I see goals that will fall, but dreams that will come true.

Despite the hard times within each day  
As long as I know that I hold the power to a path that lies in my way.

-Sisters Forever

**From The Beat: Sounds like some strong advice to us! The future really is yours. It is what you make of it. Stay focused on that path you mentioned. It will draw closer and closer with each of your successes.**

## A Song For You

Verse

Me and my girls, don't have nothing else to do except daydream about you. You have so much of me but you can't even see, how my love runs so deep.

Chorus:

Look into my eyes. Do to see what I see? Look into my eyes. Do you see what I see? I like the way you look at me. You the only one who can make me feel so special. Look in my eyes, try to see what I see.

Verse

Valentin don't let your love fade a way, one love of a lifetime, so divine. The way you put yourself on the line makes me feel I'm the one for my baby.

Chorus

-Helen

**From The Beat: Hey Helen, this is alright! Have you considered maybe doing song writing for a living or as a start to the music industry? You might just have a hit here! What does the music sound like?**

## A Letter To Sweetness

Dear Self,

I am a strong, outgoing person who understands the challenges I will face, and the ones I won't. I am sophisticated and very smart. I want to tell myself to keep my head up and don't turn down help when I need it.

Don't worry about the pain I had at home. Just concentrate on my life and my hopes and dreams. What happened in the past is done. Of course it will never be forgotten.

My "self" is who I have to take care of first.

-Sweetness

**From The Beat: Like they say, you can't clean anyone else's house before you clean your own. Ain't nothing selfish about taking care of yourself first, it has to be a priority to succeed. We hope that the person you describe yourself being continues to grow stronger.**

## Air

At first you were as pure as the Virgin Mary.  
Now you're polluted by people's thoughtless decisions.  
How could we take advantage of you like that?

There's only one of you,  
and billions of us,  
That's not fair.

It doesn't matter how many regrets regarding the damage we've caused.

One day you'll evaporate to space,  
and we'll all pay.

You never did us any harm.  
Every purpose you have in life  
is to give and give,  
but one can only give so much.

-Amanda

**From The Beat: We are really curious about who you are describing? Your flow almost sounds religious, but we wonder if it could be in reference to someone else? Is this an apology to air itself, to God, or to an unnamed person? In any event, it is well written and we will be looking forward to more pieces from you in the future.**

## "The Game"

People creeping no one's sleeping

Snort a line, feeling fine

It may burn but there's no passing my turn  
Begin to hit it, never want to quit it.

Fien'ing for dope leaves me no hope.

Time is running fast

What happened to my past

It's no lie

You'll do anything to get high

Now you have lost your family, dignity and friends  
In this game no one pretends.

-Sisters Forever

**From The Beat: We think that a lot of people in the game are pretending. They are pretending that everything is O.K. when they know it is far from it. This poem speaks some solid truths though. We dig that and got to give you props.**

## Family Cycles

Drugs and dope fiends, parents that don't give a hoot.

Mom ran outta luck and she don't have a no loot.

Where the hell is my dad? Who knows?

That bastard left, haven't seen him in 16 years,

Don't even shed tears,

'cause obviously he don't care

or else he would have been there.

I feel life ain't fair.

But now I'm here in Walden House getting' my life together,

'cause I felt the need to do dope like my mom and dad,

Then soon after it went too far,

I began to lie, cheat, steal, whatever!

I went from smoking dope to ridin' with the homies from the streets of Hayward to Union City pullin' licks,

man, just doin' whatever.

Then I got rolled on and now I'm stuck getting my life together like I should have been from the start.

I don't mind 'cause now I'm a different person with a new beginning, with a new life and a new future.

I'm looking forward to being a whole new person.

-Lil' Rabbit

**From the Beat: Drugs don't get you nowhere but dead or jail if you are lucky. It is possible to survive from all that. We are glad to hear you are making a change for the better. Just remember to stay focused and always stay involved. That is one way that's gonna keep you clean. Also don't be afraid to ask for help. Good luck to you.**

## A Letter To Me

Hey girlie girl,

How are you? It seems like you doing good. I mean you still got a few issues to work on, but we all still got shhh to work on.

So you getting ready to transition out of Walden House soon, dat's coo'-coo'. So you 'bout to get you own spot, graduate, then go to college. Damn, man, you doin' big things!

You just gotta tone it down when it come to losin' yo' freedom over these ol' bucket head, stank breath, bald-headed lookin broads.

But, um, anyways, one thing you seriously need to work on before you get on, is your eating disorder. I think other than that you doin' good! (Keep it up)

Oh yeah, and stop trippin' off of one boy. He ain't all that anyways!

-Diamond Princess

**From the Beat: Sounds to us like Diamond Princess is moving in a whole new direction, and one that has major pay offs down the line. Don't measure your worth by that one boy, either. You know what you need to work on, and we have a lot of faith in you that you're gonna do it. Keep on movin'!**



## Cycles In My Family

The cycles in my family are different. There's no violence, no yelling, no smoking. There's also no father figure. There are emotions, but it's my mom's. It's hard for her to do anything, so how she affects our whole family — me, my little brother, my older sisters, and even the family who don't live in our house.

My mother is the one who raised me, the one who taught me but what she taught me is not anything that helped me. She never really encouraged me. She would mention something I should do, like get a job or study, but then that was it.

I guess most of us kids turned out alright. My sisters are both married; my older brother still lives at home; my little brother is hell smart, and I am stuck up in rehab. Now I am not trying to say it's my moms fault I am in here, 'cause it's not. I made my own choices and stole cars and did drugs to get here.

But I found out there are people who I can count on. My two sisters are very encouraging and are role models for me. I would not want to turn out like my mom, but I would love to turn out like my sisters.

-Monica

**From The Beat: So who taught you how to read, write your name, walk, talk, eat and all the things that you learned before you were in school? Maybe you have a little more to be grateful to your mom for than you realize. After all, there must be a reason why your sisters turned out to be role models... So what led you in the direction you've been traveling?**

## Back On Board

In the old neighborhood  
Group Homed just for placement  
Hearing stories  
Surrounded by memories  
Lakeview  
Mission  
Hunter's Point  
Tenderloin  
Chinatown  
Balboa Park Station  
A stop away from  
Where we used to park  
The old bus stop  
That crack head we lived with  
Fat jokes and five-year-olds  
acting hard  
Mom telling me I'm not street-wise  
(I'm not)  
Now that I'm alone  
I guess I have to learn

-Drusilla

**From The Beat: Do you think that this has been a learning experience for you? Is it something that you had to learn the hard way? What is it that you have learned so far? When you are grown with a family of your own, where do you hope to live?**

## Remember

Remember his name  
Remember his face  
Remember his smile and warm embrace  
Remember the way he stole your heart  
And remember when he ripped it apart  
Remember the way he looked in your eyes  
Remember the way he didn't care when you started to cry  
Remember the way he said he loved you  
Remember how she loves him now too  
Remember when you notice things starting to change  
Remember that day when he called you her name  
Remember when you two started to fight  
Remember that you couldn't deal with him that night  
Remember taking that pin and dragging it across your arm  
Hoping some day he'll see into your storm  
Remember that day when you went to his house  
Remember your best friend and him on the couch  
Remember how she said, "It's not what it seems"  
And that's when he said, "Baby you can't live without me"  
Remember those little hints you were too blind to see  
I knew all along he was cheating on me  
Remember when he wanted to do it without the light  
Remember feeling self-conscious after that night  
Remember that day when you were in so much pain  
Remember on day she'll fell the same  
Remember feeling empty before y'all met  
But all females want love, so you can't blame yourself for that  
Remember the way your mother said, "Be strong"  
Remember how hard that is to do when he makes you feel wrong  
Remember how you've always tried to change  
But somehow you still remain the same  
Remember all the guys that came before him  
And remember fighting over the same shhh with them  
Remember the four or five years you've been in this game  
The four or five years you've felt happiness then pain  
Remember all the ways people tried to help  
But they'll never, ever know how you felt  
Remember that day when no one knew anything was wrong  
Remember thinking, "Forget them all!"  
Remember telling yourself no one cared  
And then thinking, "Don't be scared"  
Remembering the man you love is loving another  
Just gave you the strength to grab that cutter  
Remember that blade touching your arm  
Remembering the thought of him was just pushing you on  
Then all of a sudden you heard the phone ring  
Remember thinking about answering it  
But can't remember when you did  
Then hearing his punk voice on the other line  
Saying he's "sorry baby" and please come home  
Remember giving in to his sweet voice and  
Forgetting about tears and the pain  
Remembering the ways he held your umbrella in the rain  
Forgetting about the times he wasn't there  
Forgetting about all the nights the rain wet your hair  
Forgetting about the blade in your hand, as it hit the floor  
Forgetting those days when he called you a whore  
Forgetting all the times you've cried  
Forgetting a minute ago you wanted to die  
Forgetting that he's still the same  
Remember thinking maybe he's changed  
Forgetting all the hurt and the pain from before  
Forgetting that he's a stupid man whore  
Forgetting you are too weak to do this again  
Remember thinking all you want is his love  
And to be happy again.

-Monica

**From The Beat: Wow! What a truly powerful piece Monica. You write this with an emotional edge that reaches into people as if your message and the emotion invested in it has transcended the page! If this poem reflects anything of what you have been through, then we must applaud the courage and strength that you have not just to express this but to have survived it and still be the strong and determined young woman that you are. Keep your head up! And remember that your worth does not depend on some man's approval. A man who mistreats you, calls you names, cheats on you is not worth the tears you've shed. You're too good for him!**

## Pain

P is for the potential we all have but are afraid to use, and for the people we love who come in and out of our lives.

A is for the attitude we get when people try to help us, and for the attention we all seek to find.

I is for our incurable heartache that will never end, and for the incredible dangers we will face in our future.

N is for the pain we notice all around us, and the negative things we all have been told, and for the things we need but can't never have.

Pain is our life and our life is filled with pain.

-Anonymous

**From The Beat: Is the cup half full or half empty? That is the question many people hear determining if they are optimistic or pessimistic? Your poem kind of reflects that. You took a word we associate with hurt and transformed it into something else. That takes a lot of talent. Could you also have written a poem titled "Joy" with its own list of positive attributes? After all, while life is pain, it's also much more than that. Keep on exercising that.**

## A Teenage Crisis

Life is so hard for teens. I mean, damn! People can't even walk out the house without being involved in a shooting, and it seems that no one even fears death anymore.

Some teenagers feel that to get more strength, they have to do drugs, but see, that's called drug abuse. A lot of us just think about sex, but that's not that important compared to our education. If we are unsafe, we could catch an STD, and then what? Not all are curable. So what then? We die.  
Our teenage population is slowly fading away. Ay, man, our neighborhoods are out of control. There's too much shhh going on, and people can't even leave their house without carrying heat. We are getting killed every single day, day after day.

But people need to be themselves. Until we do that, things won't change. But what about our future?

-Sylvia

**From The Beat: It is a really ugly situation out there, no doubt Sylvia. But at the same time there are also a lot more youngstas surviving the game than are falling victim to it. Don't lose hope young home girl. You have righteous cause to be concerned about things, but at the same time, you have some opportunities to overcome all of that, and make your future what you want it to be.**

## Recovering From Poison

The taste of your toxicity is repeating.

Why did I choose to take you in,  
day after day?

Meeting you was my biggest mistake.

You're so weak,  
All you are is a quick escape.  
Complications from your exit  
is nothing I'll miss.

Forget you,

I'm so much bigger than being your  
friend.

It's over.

One day I'll wake up,  
and you'll be gone forever.

I can't wait.

Finally I'll live to live,  
not live to kill like you.

You have no good intentions.

You're a cult killer with no remorse,  
and some day we'll win.

How can you be here,

with all of the unfinished lives  
and families you've destroyed?

I'm a fighter against your existence,  
And a hero in recovery.

-Amanda

**From The Beat: We hope that you are saving all these poems. One day you will have a powerful collection, maybe worth it to you to get published.**

## Why Am I Still Breathing

I don't understand why I'm still alive.

I've done everything you shouldn't do to stay alive.

Why haven't I died?

There must be a reason that I don't know.  
Part of me feels that I'm not worthy to live,

But still I wake up,

Not sure why I'm here.

Why haven't I died?

Some people die before their time.

That's not very fair.

Life is a dream,

and when you wake up

you're dead.

How long is my dream?

-Amanda

**From The Beat: There is a poem by the American poet, Edgar Allen Poe, which asks: "Is all that we seem but a dream within a dream?" It seems like you're asking the same question, one which can't be answered. Life is truly a mystery, and one which you'll just have to wait to see how it plays out.**

## Don't Leave Me

My biggest fear right now is losing you.

It seems like I just received your love for the first time,  
except it's been here this whole time,

I've just been blind.

As much as I may not like it,

You gave me life.

-Amanda

**From The Beat: Is this a poem to your mother (who gave you life)? If so, it makes us wonder what made you blind to her love at first, and what opened your eyes?**

## The Way I Feel

This is the way I feel. I feel that my life is nothing because I'm always in the Hall. Every time I get released, I end up coming back like two or three days later. Every time I come back, the judge just laughs at me. So far I've been lucky because the judge has been giving me chances. Now I'm in drug court and I messed up.

One time now I'm going for chance two on a release on 28th of April. So now I'm going back to my parents house in Nipomo, California, trying to work my drug habits out and staying clean. To live a better life and have my family stop stressing over stupid shhh.

-Edgar

**From The Beat: You're getting another chance to stay clean and out of the system. What changes will you make? Will you have to stop going to certain places or chilling with certain homies? How can you start feeling like your life is something?**

## Thankful

Sometimes I feel like God does not love me, but then I think about when he sacrificed himself on the cross so that our sins can be forgiven. Then I rejoice by thinking about all the good things God has done for me, such as putting this lovely lady Jean C. in my life and givin' me the best mother that I've ever known in my entire life. I thank God for many, many things that he's done for me and tell him how much I love him and I do pray every now and then. I try to do my best in all that I can do. In the future plan, I will want to go to heaven.

-Michael

**From The Beat: We're happy you're thankful for the good things in your life. Now how are you going to be thankful enough to stay on the outs?**

## I Wish

I wish life didn't get harder but easier. If only I stopped ahead of time and thought about what I was doing, I bet my wish would have come true.

If only when I was nine, I didn't crave that pipe. Yeah, things would have been easier.

If only sooner I learned to trust in God, the hard part would have been done.

If only now I can change things around I'd have a straight road to walk on.

I can't change the past, but I could change the present to help my future.

I wish life didn't get harder but easier. My wish will come true, starting now.

-Dragonfly

**From The Beat: Let's see it happen! How are you going to change? Will it be hard to keep true to your wish on the outs? If so, use your time in the Hall to make a plan about how you are going to face the challenges on the outs.**

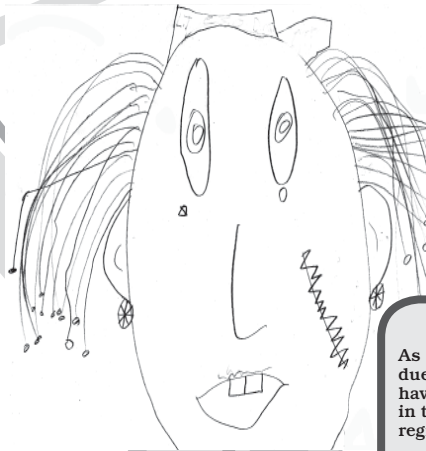
## Change For The Better

I think that incarceration has changed me. Even though I am wrongfully accused for what happened, it doesn't matter, because I was pretty bad when I was out and now I have God in my life and it has changed my life for the better.

I feel like God is the most important person in my life and I never want to turn on him.

-Chris

**From The Beat: We don't hear too often that Juvenile Hall is a positive experience. What happened behind bars that made you change?**



## Changed

I have to give it up to God for my changing. I finally gave my life to him and I saw myself change slowly.

Don't get me wrong, I still get down with my friends and kick it, but not the same way I used to. I am more aware of my surroundings and now I know I have someone to love me. I don't feel the nagging need to be accepted by the people around me. I can be happy just being me. So I gotta give it up to him. To all locked up, stay up and don't give up.

-Chad

**From The Beat: We're happy for you, getting your change on. You say you changed slowly. How long did it take? Are you still changing? Will you ever stop changing?**

## Taking Too Long

Sitting in my room with nothing to do  
So I just close my eyes and start to think about you.  
All the tears you shed

Have made me wish I was dead.

I always knew you loved me, but it flew past my head  
But now I want to say I'm sorry, you never let me down.  
It's too bad it took so long to turn around.

-Sorry

**From The Beat: Are you turned around now? It's easy to say those words when you're locked up, away from the temptations and challenges. Will you stay turned around on the outs?**

## The Beat

As I sit in Juvenile Hall, I think about all the months I have lost due to getting locked up. That lost time I can never regain. I could have been doing something positive rather than wasting my time in the Hall. I think about being home, free with my family. I really regret my bad decision.

Now I might be getting sent away. I wish I could fall asleep one night and wake up in my room. I know that ain't gonna happen. So it's up to me to get out of this predicament and just man up to my conscience. For every action, there's going to be consequences. So I suggest you shape up and get out of this stupid system. Peace.

-Mark

**From The Beat: What are the positive things you could be doing instead of wasting time in Juvenile Hall? Can you do anything in the Hall that will get you ahead on the outs? Write a letter to people you appreciate on the outs letting them know you're thankful? Be there for somebody having a hard time in Juvenile Hall? Get your yoke on?**

## Looking Out My Window

When I look out my window, I wish that I didn't do what I did so that I could be at home with my mom and my sister. I wish I could just turn back time so I could make up for all my mistakes.

-Misty

**From The Beat: Can you make a plan to stay legit, so you don't have to miss your mom and sister again?**

## Back In Time

When I look out my window, I wish I could be at home with my family. I wish I wouldn't have done what I did to get myself in here. I wish I could change back time!

-Rosa

**From The Beat: So, how are you going to keep out of Juvenile Hall in the future? What changes will you have to make?**

## What I Wish

When I look out my window, I wish I was at home with my baby's dad. I wish I could be out buying things for my baby. I wish I could be taking pictures with my family, going for walks with friends, and kicking back watching TV.

When I look out my window that's what I wish.

-Kimberly

**From The Beat: We wish you could have those things, too. How are you going to stay out in the future so you can be there for your baby? If you wrote a letter to your baby about the future you want your baby to have, what would you say?**

## Sometimes

Sometimes I just want to break down and cry

Sometimes I feel like I should die

Sometimes I feel like I don't belong

Sometimes I feel like I've waited too long

Sometimes I just need to be alone

Sometimes I think I can smell your cologne

Sometimes I think I love you so much

Sometimes things don't work out for the best

Sometimes I feel like I need to rest

Sometimes I just want to break down and cry.

-Kimberly

**From The Beat: What do you do when you're feeling like these things? Do you take a minute to be alone and chill? Do you talk to people? Do you try to forget and move on? Do you think you do the right thing? Or do you wish you handled your sadness differently?**

**I wish I could fall asleep one night and wake up in my room**

**I can't change the past,  
but I could change the  
present to help my future.**



### Lo Que Quiero Ser

A mí me ha pasado muchas cosas, por ejemplo algunas veces he hecho cosas malas y ahora me arrepiento de lo que he hecho. Ahora quiero portarme bien y ser trabajador, salir adelante y no hacer las cosas malas.

Quiero ser un hombre de bien para no tener problemas con las personas que conozco. Quiero ser agradable con ellos y ayudarles cuando necesiten algo.

**From The Beat: Nos parece bien que cambies tu vida y tu actitud de como tratar a la gente. Deseamos que tu cambio sea un progreso de bien en tu vida, la verdad es que ya es tiempo que busques la salida de todos tus problemas.**

### What I Want To Be

Lots of things have happened to me. For example, sometimes I have done bad things and now I regret what I did. Now I want to behave myself and be a worker, come out ahead in life, and not do bad things.

I want to be a good man so I won't have any problems with the people I know. I want to be pleasant in their eyes and help them out whenever they need something.

-Ramiro, Santa Cruz

### El Desmadre Que He Hecho

Me levante esta mañana pensando en cuando me iban a sacar de la cárcel pensando en mi familia y como lo estarían pasando ellos. Estaba recordando los demadres que hice en la calle cuando estaba afuera. Pensé en todas las cosas que hice sin pensar en las consecuencia que ahora estoy pagando. Cuando estaba en la calle tomaba con mis homies y nos poníamos a fumar droga y a cotorriar con las jainas.

Si salgo me voy a poner a ayudar a mi jefita.

**From The Beat: No te sientas muy deprimido, acuerdate que esto pasa, pero lo bueno es que siempre hay tiempo para reflexionar en las cosas que uno hace mal. No es bonito recordad y extrañar a nuestros seres querido desde aquí adentro, verdad. Esperamos que de verdad te pongas a ayudarlo a tu jefecita, mira que eres el hombre de la casa y te tienes que portarte como tal.**

### The Mess I've Made

I woke up this morning thinking about when I am going to get released from this jail and thinking about my family and how they're doing. I was reminiscing on the dirt I did in the streets when I was on the outs. I thought about all the things I did before thinking about the consequences that I am now paying. When I was in the streets, I drank with my homies and we would smoke drugs, and kick it with females.

If I get out, I'm going to start helping my mother.

-Anonymous, Marin

### Lo Que Es Serio Para Mí

Lo que es serio para mí es mi vida. En estos momentos me encuentro entre la espada y la pared, sin salida. Por eso tomo mi libertad en serio porque mi vida no es un juego. Ya estoy cansado de que el gobierno juegue con mi vida.

**From The Beat: Claro, estamos de acuerdo contigo. Uno tiene que cuidar su vida, porque uno decide que hacer con la vida. Y si tú te has dado cuenta que tu libertad es parte de tu vida, sigue adelante y busca lo mejor para ti, tu libertad.**

### My Life Is Serious

What's serious for me is my life. At these moments I find myself up against the wall without an exit. That's why I take my life very serious because my life is not a joke. I'm tired of the government playing with me.

-Chino, LCRS



### He Visto Mucha Violencia

Yo he visto en mi barrio que hay jóvenes que roban y matan. He visto mucha violencia y eso quisiera que ya no existiera. Quisiera que cambien, que haya paz y ya no más matanza.

**From The Beat: A todos nos gustaria una vida asi como esta, donde no haya ningún tipo de muertes ni dolor. Pero la pregunta es que es lo que ayudaria a cambiar todo esto.**

### I Have Seen A Lot Of Violence

I have seen in my 'hood that there are youth that steal and kill. I have seen a lot of violence and that's something that I wish would just cease to exist. I wish things would change, that there would be peace and no more murders.

-Manuel, Marin

### Para Mi Amor

Antes que nada, les quiero dar las gracias al Beat por venir un martes más y por permitirme escribir unas letras de amor que yo siento.

Hola mi amor, antes que nada, quiero decirte que te amo. Mija, ya sabes que perdi mi caso. Le quiero decir es que me van a dar tiempo y también hablarte de mi amor. Espero que con el tiempo que yo no esté contigo que no estes haciendo cosas que no debes de hacer, cosas que nos pueda dañar el futuro a los dos. A mí no me gustaría saber cosas malas de ti, no me gustaría saber que me estas engañando porque no te quiero perder. No quiero que pasen estas cosas porque quiero estar contigo por el resto de mi vida.

También Chiquita, quiero que sepas que te extraño muchísimo. No hay día que no piense en ti. No sabes cuanta falta me haces. Apesar de todas las cosas y todos los momentos que pasamos, nunca los olvidaré y nunca lo he olvidado. Siempre estaras en mi mente y siempre has estado en mi corazón.

También quiero decirte que cuando salga vamos a estar juntos no importando lo que pase. Pase lo que pase mis sentimientos hacia ti nunca van a cambiar pase lo que me pase. Yo siempre te voy a amar con todo mi corazón y espero que como yo te amo a ti, que así también me ames. Espero que sientas lo mismo que yo estoy sintiendo por ti. Mi princeza, por ahora no te digo adios sino hasta luego. Con mucho amor por ti Serena.

**From The Beat: Sentimos mucho que hayas perdido tu caso. Te queremos aconsejar que no todo está perdido, aunque tenga que hacer años pagando por lo que hicistes. Vas a tener la oportunidad de salir algún día y rehacer tu vida con la persona que tanto quieres. Amigo, ahora viene lo difícil, tienes que hacer un gran esfuerzo para mantener vivo el amor que esta chica te tienes. ¿Cómo puedes hacerlo? Pues probandole a ella que vas a cambiar y que estas arrepentido por haberla dejado sola por culpa de tus errores. También no te estamos culpando, todos cometemos errores, pero de ellos nosotros aprendemos.**

### To My Love

Before we begin, I want to thank The Beat for coming yet another Tuesday to my unit and for allowing me to write letters about the love that I feel.

Hello my love, before I say anything else, I want to tell you that I love you. Girl, you already know that I lost my case. I want to tell you that they're going to give me time and also to talk to you about my love. I hope that for the time that I am not with you, you're not doing things that you should not be doing, things that could damage our future together. I would not like to know bad things about you. I would not like to know that you're playing on me because I do not want to lose you. I don't want these things to happen because I want to be with you for the rest of my life.

Also "Chiquita," I would like for you to know that I miss you very much. There's not a day that goes by in which I am not thinking about you. You don't know how much I miss you. Even though at times we went through some hard times, I will never forget those moments and I have yet to forget about them. You will always be in my mind and you've always been in my heart.

I also want to tell you that when I get out, we're going to be together, regardless of what happened. Regardless of what may happen between now and then, my feelings towards you will not change. I'm always going to love you with my entire heart and I hope that you feel the same way I do about everything I just said. I hope that you feel the same way I feel. My princess, for now it's just "I'll see you later" instead of "good-bye." I have lots of love for you "Serena."

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

**If I get out, I'm going to start helping my mother.**

### No Le Debo nada A Nadie

Yo no le debo a nada a nadie ni le temo a nadie porque así como estoy, estoy bien. Ni tampoco me importa tener muchos enemigos. Yo soy solo y solo me enfrente a mis problemas que tengo con cualquiera.

**From The Beat: De verdad, que fuerza de voluntad tuya. Amigo, deberias de pensar en las cosas que dices, en lo mejor para ti. Hay muchas cosas que debes de temer en esta vida, porque si prefieres vivir de esta manera, sólo encontrarás sufrimiento, y muchos problemas para las personas que te rodean. La vida no es sólo de valentia. Si sigues penando de esta manera llegarás a terminar mal.**

### I Don't Owe Nothing To Anyone

I don't owe anyone anything, and I'm not scared of anyone because the way I am doing things now, I'm doing alright. I don't even care if I have many enemies. I do things on my own and I only confront the problems that I have alone, not with anyone.

-Pinguino, San Mateo



## En Mi Mundo

En mi mundo, nada es facil. Yo tengo que trabajar duro para tener lo que yo quiera. Como por ejemplo, mi hermano tiene lo que el queria y yo no lo tengo todo.

**From The Beat: Así es la vida, si quieres algo tienes que esforzarte para obtener. Recuerda este dicho, "el que quiere, tiene."**

## In My World

In my world, nothing is easy. I have to work hard to get what I want. For example: My brother had what he wants and I don't have everything.

-José B1, SF/YGC

## Me Lebane Esta Mañana

Me lebane esta mañana, me prendieron las luces de los cuartos, me abrieron la puerta de mi cuarto, me lebane bien emputado porque estaba soñando bien chingón, y esto estaff me despertaron. ¿Para que? Sólo para bañarnos a las 6:30, y luego otra vez al cuarto.

**From The Beat: Que lástima que te hayas despertado así. No se siente bien estar en un lugar donde te digan cosa que hacer verdad. Para la otra vez, procura quedarte en casa.**

## I Woke Up This Morning

I woke up this morning and they turned on the lights in my room. They opened the door to my room. I woke up very drowsy because I had been peacefully dreaming and the staff woke me up. For what? Just so we could take a shower at 6:30 am and then back to my room.

-Juan, Santa Cruz

## Carta Para Mi Mismo

Te escribo esta carta para poderte decir esta palabras. Hey nomas te quiero decir que espero que salgas pronto para que puedas estar afuera con tu familia. Quiero estar libre como antes.

También te quiero decir que dejes de fumar, y que te portes bien, que vayas a la escuela para que puedas estar fuera del sistema. Espero que hagas bien en el campo para que dejen ir a la escuela, estes con tu familia. Quiero que cambies para que tus hermanos tengan a alguien a quien mirar.

Sé que me entiendes lo que te quiero decir. Te espero pronto acá afuera para poder mirarte.

**From The Beat: Que linda carta te hicistes, esperamos que la concerves para que te ayude mucho en todas tus cosas. Sabias que si haces lo que te dices la carta vas a ser muy dichoso en la vida. Si amigo, aunque no creas así lo sera. Por el momento, cuando leas esto vas a creer que son tonteras, pero uno se da cuenta hasta cuando uno ya esta grande y cuando muchas cosas malas que se pudieron ser evitadas pasan. Que no te pase lo peor para entender.**

## A Letter To Myself

I'm writing this letter to you so I can be able to tell you these words. Hey, I just wanted to tell you that I hope you get out soon so you can be on the outs with your family. I want to be free like I was before.

I also want to tell you to stop smoking, to behave yourself, and go to school so you can be out of the system. I hope that you do well in camp so they let you go back to school and be with your family. I want you to change so your brothers can have someone to look up to.

I know that you understand what I am trying to say. I'll be waiting to see you in the outs.

-J, San Mateo

## En Este Mundo

En este mundo yo no sé que hacer porque yo tengo muchos problemas con mi familia, más con mi padre.

**From The Beat: ¿Ha intentado solucionar estos problemas? ¿Qué tipo de problemas son? ¿Si pudieras borrarlos lo hicieras?**

## In This World

In this world, I don't know what to do because I have lots of problems with my family, even more so with my father.

-Pinguino, San Mateo

## Haciendo Mi Tiempo

¿Que onda Raza? Pues nomas aqui en la montaña haciendo mi tiempo, calmadito, llebandomela bien suave con mis carnales. Somos unos pocos muchachos esperando que llegue el fin de semana. ¿Me entiendes?

**From The Beat: Esperamos que te estes portando bien porque no está bien que esten en malas cosas después de tantas cosas que te han pasado. Así calmadito es mejor, termina y ver a casa a ser un hombre.**

## Passing My Time

What's up my Latin race? Well, I'm up here in the mountains calmly doing my time, taking it easy with my bros. We're a few guys waiting for the weekend to come. You understand me?

-Pelón, 150 Crew

**I also want to tell you to stop smoking, to behave yourself, and go to school so you can be out of the system**

## To My Vato (Man)

Nunca te voy a olvidar porque te amo. Te extraño y extraño las cosas que hacíamos cuando estábamos juntos, (I'm never going to forget you because I love you. I miss you and I miss the things that we did when we were together).

I'll always be your jaina, ruca, (your girl, female), and your little chiquitita (shorty). I'll be yours forever, babe. I love you so much even though we can't see each other's faces right now. Y me desespero pero vamos a estar juntos en nuestros pensamientos. (And I get desperate, but we're going to be together in our thoughts). Mi chulito, mi vato más rico, morenito (my daddy, my tasty thug, my brown boy, I put you before anybody papi te lo juro (daddy, I promise you). Vas a ver (you're going to see) my little bald-headed Mexican, you know it's true. I will never lose las memorias que hicimos, (the memories that we made) So far, I still don't worry.

I get out on May 20 just wait for me. To all locked up, keep trucha, (watch your backs).

-Gata GU, SF/YGC

**From The Beat: Se nota que estas enamorada de tu vato. ¿Dinos donde está él? ¿Por qué si lo quieres estas lejos de él? We hope you make it out there, y vivas la vida de la manera que tiene que ser. Recuerda que si quieres conservar algo, tienes que buscar la manera en como tenerlo y estar con lo que quieres. You know what we mean.**

## Mi Vida En Mi Mundo

Mi linda madre me ha tratado bien pero mi padre mal, porque antes cuando estaba más pequeño me regañaba y me pegaba. Desde que nos dejó, mi vida ha sido más feliz, junto con el resto de mi familia.

Nuestros maestros de la escuela nos decían que si algo como estos problema pasaban, que se los contara y ellos me podrían ayudar con esto.

Lo bueno es que en mi familia nadie usa drogas, pero he visto personas en vicios de las drogas que abandonan sus trabajos, su familia y andan tirados en las calles. Creo que nosotros somos más portado porque nosotros seguimos los consejos de nuestros padres.

**From The Beat: Que bien que tu padre se ha alejado de ti y de molestartos. Gracias a Dios nadie usa droga en tu familia. Esperamos que sigas el consejo y no te metas a usar porquerias.**

## My Life In My World

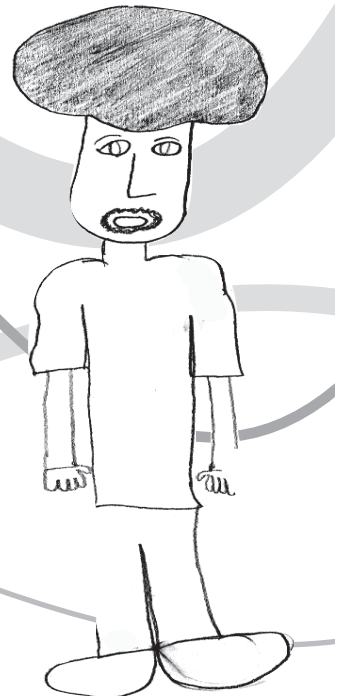
My wonderful mother has treated well, but as for my father, he's treated me bad because before, when I was little, he would scold me and hit me. Ever since he left, my life has been happier living with the rest of my family.

My schoolteachers would tell me that if I had any problems like the ones I just mentioned, that I should tell them and they would be able to help me with my problems.

A good thing, though, is no one in my family uses drugs, but I have seen drug addicts who abandon their jobs, their families, and are out on the streets like garbage.

Besides viewing those kinds of people, I think we shouldn't mess with that stuff because we should follow the advice of our parents.

-José B2, SF/YGC



### En Mi Mundo

Cuando yo sali de mi país, cuando venía viajando hacia los E E U U, me sentía mal cuando veníamos en el barco sobre el mal y sentía mucho miedo a que el barco se undiera en medio del mar.

Durante todo el camino hubieron días que la pasamos bien y mal. Yo pensaba llegar a los EEUU donde mi familia y después ponerme a trabajar para poder sacar a mis padres adelante y para mi futuro.

Cuando venía en el desierto me la pasé muy mal porque estaba triste. Era un sufrimiento de tantas cosas que pasé. También venía pensando en mis padres y mi familia.

**From The Beat: Que lástima nos da que tu sueño no se hayan cumplido. Deseamos de corazón que puedas sobrepasar todo las cosas que perdistes. Por el momento la pasastes bien, que no. No te aflijas amigo, todo estará bien en estos momentos, ten calma y veras que se calmara la marea.**

### In My World

When I left my country, as I was traveling to the US on a ship in the sea, I worried, because I didn't want the ship we were on to sink because we were in the middle of the sea.

During our entire trip, we had our good days, and we had our bad ones as well. I had visions of coming to the US and going to where my family is, and after that, get myself a job so I could help my family get ahead in life, and also for my own future.

When I was coming through the desert, my time was very bad because I was sad. It was bad because I had to endure many things. Also, I was coming to the US thinking about my parents and my family.

-Diego, Marin

**Antes que mi madre se separara de mi padre, él la golpiaba y cuando el chiflaba, nosotros, teníamos que estar enfrente de él en menos de dos minutos o si no nos golpeaba**

### Ciclos En Mi familia

Mis padres usaban drogas. Mi papa era un coyote, una persona que pasa gente a los Estados Unidos. Mi padre usaba cocaína, y tomaba cervezas Tecate. Antes que mi madre se separara de mi padre, él la golpiaba y cuando el chiflaba, nosotros, teníamos que estar enfrente de él en menos de dos minutos o si no nos golpeaba.

Entonces, mi mamá se separó de mi padre y se juntó con mi padrastro, lo cual es un federal, pero de todas maneras él pasaba drogas a otros países. Teníamos bastante dinero, pero agarraron muchos movimientos y se quedó sin dinero, pero todavía tiene su salario.

Unos cuanto años después, nos venimos a los Estados Unidos. Separado, llegamos a los Estados Unidos y me trajeron aquí al bote.

Pienso salir e ir a la escuela para salir adelante. Mi madre ya no usa drogas, mi padre tampoco. Mi padrastro nunca ha usado drogas ni toma.

**From The Beat: Parecen que han vivido la vida rápida, lo cual no esta bien porque recuerda que todo lo que viene facil, facil se va. Recuerda que se vinieron aquí a cambiar su vida, y no es justo que tu te guies a otro camino confuso. Piensa bien las cosas Mario.**

### Cycles In My Family

My parents used to do drugs. My father was a "coyote," someone who smuggled people into the United States, and my mother used drugs like cocaine, and she drank Tecate. Before my mother and my father got divorced, he used to hit her, and when he whistled, we had to be in front of him in less than two minutes or he would hit us.

So my mother got divorced from my father and she got together with my stepfather and he is a federal, but he used to smuggle drugs to other countries and we had a lot of money, but a lot of their deals got raided, so he was left without any money, but he still had his salary.

A few years later, we came to the United States. Separately, we arrived to the United States to come out ahead in life. My mother no longer uses drugs, my father as well. My stepfather has never used drugs or been a drinker.

-Mario B2, SF/YGC

### Una Carta A Mi Mismo

Si yo le escribiera una carta a mí mismo le escribiera como me siento. Me siento mal porque mataron a mi homeboy flaco, pero lo que más me hace sentir mal es que también acaban de matar a otro homie, Choco. Pero no hay pido porque las lacras que lo mataron ya estan laquiado y van a hacer 25 años a vida.

Hey Choco no te aguites homies porque siempre vas a estar en nuestros corazones. No te olvides lo que somos. Siempre vamos a tenerte respeto a ti. RIP Choco.

**From The Beat: Es muy difícil perder a un homie, verdad y más cuando fue como un hermano. Amigo, te aconsejamos que te salgas de las cosas que estas, porque como podemos ver, estan muriendo todos los que estan en tu clica, y esto es algo muy arriesgoso. La vida no es un juego, la vida es algo precioso que se va si uno no la sabe aprovechar. Ten presente nuestras palabras y no tomes estas palabras como regaño sino como consejos.**

### A Letter To Myself

If I wrote a letter to myself, I would write to myself about how I'm feeling as I write the letter. I feel bad because my homeboy, Flaco, got killed, but what makes me feel really bad is the fact that another homie of mine, Choco, just got killed as well. But it's all good because the folks who killed him are already locked up and are going to have to serve 25 years to life in jail.

Hey Choco, don't worry, because you will always be in our hearts. Don't forget what we are. We are always going to have respect for you, RIP Choco.

-Lil' Capone, San Mateo

### Lo Primero Que Recorde

Me lebante esta mañana y lo primero que recorde es como hice sufrir a mi jefa y a mi jefe. Los hice sufrir mucho. No se que me pasaba por ese momento, y todo porque era un pinche borracho y drogadicto.

**From The Beat: Sentimos mucho que tu vicio en esas cosas malas te haya alejado de la gente que quiere. Esperamos que abras los ojos y te des cuenta que es lo que te está haciendo daño.**

### The First Thing I Remembered

I woke up this morning and the first thing that I remembered is how I made my mother and father suffer. I made them suffer a lot. I don't know what was going through my mind at that moment. The only reason anything happened was because I was a drunk and a drug addict.

-Jorge, Marin

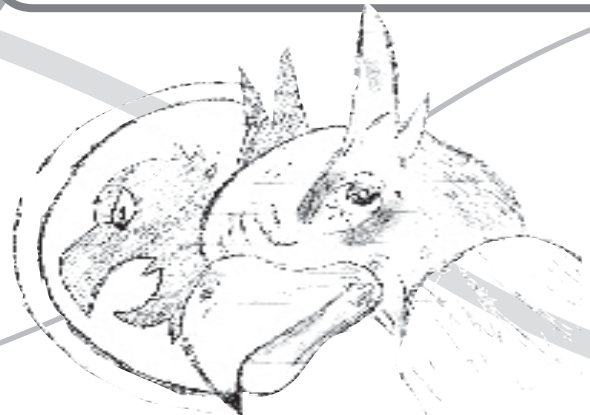
### Imagenes Perturbantes

Quiero decirles que yo vi a una persona que lo quemaron vivo las persona del pueblo, porque era un ladrón y por haber hecho cosa que no debía.

**From The Beat: Que feo ha de haber sido ver eso. ¿Dinos sentistes que estuvo bien lo que hicieron? ¿Fue eso justicia para ti? ¿Crees que participaria en uno de esos actos como lo hicieron esta personas?**

### Disturbing Images

I want to say that I saw a person get burnt alive by the people of the town because that person was a thief and did things he should not have done.



## My Son

My love for my son is more than my life. I love my son.  
My son is the only thing in life for me to live for.

-Slop E

**From The Beat: Then why are you risking being away from him? You wanna be there for your son — be there!**

## Heavy like Chevy

In my world shhh gets heavy  
Like Chevy  
Ma ninjas get locked up back-to-back  
People on the block got over  
Rock in they pocket  
Over two rocks  
Over three rocks  
And stay strapped  
Ready fo' wo'  
Knockin' down foes  
Pimpin' girls  
That what happen in ma world

-Omari

**From The Beat: Why is your whole world revolving around your life on the block, selling drugs, pimpin' girls, gettin' at your enemies, Omari? Do you have any other identity? Do you intend to put in work for your block your whole life? What do you want for your future? Are you also prepared to get busted, maybe over and over, and put in work in a penitentiary?**

## I'm Leaving Tomorrow

What's up, everybody? My name is Bad Ass. I'm from Sac. I'm in here over something hella weak, but it's coo', 'cause I'm leavin' tomorrow at 8:30 AM. So, like I always say, it's nothin'. When I get out I'm gone do it big. First, I'm going to get me a pack of Newport shorts, then go around the corner and get me a burrito. Then go kick it with my ninjas. I guess that's it. Keep y'all heads up and be coo'.

-Bad Ass

**From The Beat: Have you learned anything valuable by being in Juvy? Even if it's a resolution never to mess up and be forced to go back? What are your long-term plans for your life? Go back to school? Go to college? Travel? Have a family of your own someday? How do you think you'll be able to accomplish all that you dream of? Or is always gonna be about your ninjas?**

## My Crazy Life

When I was young I was kicking it in my cantona with my familia. But check this out — I never got along with my dad and my jefe used to hit me a lot and now that I am old enough, he does not hit me, but que me pegue so pero no lo dejo. Then my sister got me a job where she works and I got fired because I used to call in sick all the time. So, simon, that's how I do en mi vida loca. That means crazy life.

-Kenny

**From The Beat: You're right to protect yourself from letting your dad hit you, Kenny. No one has that right. But maybe you didn't have enough ganas, to get your own, legitimate job and keep it, so that you'll have at least some cash of your own. What kind of a job would you like? If you got it would you be sure to keep it?**

## You Can Trust Nobody

In my world I think a lot of shhh. I think about getting the green and gangbanging, the misses, my game. In my world I think about working solo an' makin' the money. Anyway, you can trust nobody.

-L

**From The Beat: Why are your goals locked around making money and living the street life? What do you do with all the money you've earned illegally? Is the money really worth spending time in Juvy? Can you imagine a future outside of the streets? Have you ever considered traveling into the outside world, to see what it can offer you? The world is huge! Can you get a real, legitimate job, and even if you make small money, save it and see the rest of the world? Why not try it?**

## I Woke Up This Morning

I woke up this morning and in my dream I was in love with this girl. We were going out with each other. I went to her house and we got romantic.

The next morning, when I woke up, she was being attacked by some guy. She was screaming and saying: please leave me alone or my sister will beat the heck out of you. Then I grabbed a chair and beat the guy with it. And then everything was ok for a while and we got romantic again. That was my dream.

-Ricky

**From The Beat: That's quite a dream Ricky. Sounds almost like a movie. Where do you think your dreams are derived from? Do you think that your dreams will all come true someday? Why or why not?**

## This Morning

I woke up this morning thought about my family and friends — mostly my family. I thought how much I miss by being locked up — my little brother growing up without my help and my mom getting older and needing my help.

And I need her help too. My plan is to get out and stay out.

You dig me?

-Jasmine

**From The Beat: We dig you. But you better dig yourself enough to toe the line and do the right things. Do you dig us?**

## A Good Day

I woke up this morning and showered with my fellow inmates, slept, then stood in line for pancakes. I had a good and productive day in school.

-Marilyn

**From The Beat: And what did you study today Marilyn?**

## Thought To Myself

I woke up this morning and I thought to myself: today is going to be a good day, even though I'm in jail. I know if I don't say that, the day will be a bad day. I have to accept the fact that I messed up and that I have to be doing my time.

Every day is the same. Same old thing. Wake up. Shower. Go to school. Nothing different. And that's what I wake up to everyday.

-Sadie

**From The Beat: Nicely written. We get the sense of it in crisp, tight language. Good job. How can you add variety in a monotonous place?**

## Clawed

Clawed in the head with words.  
Powers on me from an unstoppable machine.  
I didn't know the answer.  
I was the only witness.  
No one else was there with me.  
No one knew me.  
It was as if I were wearing a mask  
like you'd see in a newspaper.

-Juan

**From The Beat: Heck of a poem Juan. That first line is really terrific. "Clawed in the head with words." Poetry looks at the world from a different angle, and describes what it sees from that angle. That's a great line.**

## The World

The world is full of lies  
like the world is full of wind.  
But the world has little justice.  
Songs of weakness fill the future.  
Powerful words silence the truth.

-Matt

**From The Beat: But the truth is made of even more powerful words. Yours is a fine poem. We'd love to see more from you. We love the first**

## Pain

Pain is like darkness,  
like dark rain in a mirror.  
I wish I had some luck.  
But now that I am locked  
behind this door,  
I wish I had the key.  
I'd like to walk on the  
sidewalk  
once more.

-Matt

**From The Beat: "...like dark rain in a mirror" Matt, every poet in the country would be proud of a line like that. Good writing.**

## Frame Full

I am daydreaming at a frame full of pictures,  
and I see strangers. I am looking  
at the past and the future  
and I see them at a gate.  
They are grabbing themselves,  
tight as a fist, fighting for their lives,  
as if they were drowning in quicksand.  
They never sleep. It's as if they were ghosts.

-Juan

**From The Beat: Wow, Juan, this is a fine poem. This is a frightening daydream, but it feels real. Impressive writing.**

## What I Think About The Beat Within

I think The Beat Within helps some people write down what they're feeling or thinking which helps them if they're stressed out. It helps people locked down in facilities and who are going to prison get things off their chests. It helps people express themselves and deal with time.

-Anonymous

**From The Beat: We thank you. That's certainly part of why we exist. It feels good to be appreciated. We're grateful to you.**

## Santa Cruz



**E-MONEY** Make no mistake about it, E-Money is back to shed major light on yet another serious topic on, "Disease, Disrespect, Violence, and Death," and we are sure most of you can relate too. He's not one to hold back the truth when it comes to the foolishness too many of you readers from within know oh too well. E-Money is months away from paroling from the CDC. He writes his latest commentary from New Folsom State Prison. We've known E-Money for years, he is one of our earliest Beat writers. Once upon a time he wrote pieces in our workshops from max unit B5 in SF/YGC. It is our hope, and his, that one day he can return in person to lace the young people in the Hall.

## **They call him "Death" and if you make the wrong move behind these walls, Disease, Disrespect, or Violence will bring you to him.**

### **Disease, Disrespect, Violence, and Death**

I thought I'd start this story off by introducing y'all to your cousin-in-laws that go by the names of "Disease," "Disrespect," "Violence," and "Death." Or should I say your "blood." Someone may be saying to themselves "where is 'E-Money' going with this?" I'm going straight-up north into your minds "player," or should I say "darling." You see, this piece isn't only for you potential godly images, but also for you young, beautiful women so that y'all can learn how to be gorgeous, angelic queens if you just hear me out. Let me escape your mind, precious.

It is said that "when a little girl refuses to show respect to anyone else-including her own father and mother- it is because she doesn't have any respect for herself. She looks at herself as worthless and therefore, she goes through life as if it's worthless. She has given up on life, but what she refuses to realize is that life hasn't given up on her, because if it did, believe me we'll all know. She looks at her body as a piece of meat and serving it to the world raw instead of looking at herself as holy and special. She disrespects herself and therefore, she is like enticing bait to a gang of dirty disease infested hounds. Eventually, she finds herself screwing the whole town as a way to escape the pain she's feeling inside, and getting high makes her believe her means are justified. The little girl thinks she's rising, but what she fails to realize is that her whole world is coming crashing down like an airplane with death on its wings. The little girl doesn't realize that her actions have invited disease, disrespect, violence, and death into her wide, open home. By the time she finally comes to her senses of what happened, disease has climbed in and has taken advantage of her, disrespect has held her down and abused her, violence has viciously raped and robbed her, and death is trying to kill her. She screams for help, but no one believe her like a compulsive liar, who when everyone thinks is lying, is finally telling the truth. She throws her hands out hoping that someone would acknowledge her and pull her out of the hole she's been hiding in for so long. She throws her hands out hoping that someone, anyone, would pull her from all the hurt and pain, but she's left for not and eventually she becomes too weak to resist, and that's when Disease, Disrespect, Violence, and Death moves into smother her into their world. The beautiful, little girl was of many ages. The beautiful, little girl was the innocence in the woman. The little girl is remembered as another diamond in the rough.

Come on, I know y'all have the vision to imagine what it would be like with a world full of angels and queens. It would be very interesting to see more intelligent woman on the side of Amber Ramos and the women of VSP (Valley State Prison) standing up and representing the definition of what it means to be a woman and not a girl. It would be very interesting to see more women getting involved in this struggle, because I need you all. Y'all are like the sugar for my coffee. It taste kind of harsh without you. Y'all are like the woman for this diamond. How are we going to get married, you're not there? Y'all are the backbone for this here back. Darling, I can't do anything without you. Be my umbrella in a storming world that's looking to ruin us all. That's by trading in a mind that is spiritually blind and morally bankrupt, for a mind that is of purity and wisdom.

Little boy, are you not a savage to the streets and a punk to the system? Because I don't see no thugs in here. All that I see is a gang of cowards being told what to do and the first one that catches himself getting out of line (rebel) is being made an example out of. You see, if you're not fighting for this righteous cause, you are nothing but another victim to these real thugs we know as Disease, Disrespect, Violence, and Death. Let me show

you how.

There's a man in that boy, but you're making it impossible for him to escape by your foolish actions. You are allowing Disease, Disrespect, Violence, and Death drive those nails deeper into both his hands and feet, while ignorance is whipping him like Jesus was stuck on the cross. Little boy, can't you see that the man is dying slowly within you and that you are the only one that can come to his rescue? Don't tell me you've exchanged favors with Disease once again, by going in that girl unprotected and allowing Disease to bring that man within you closer to death? Little boy, don't you care about yourself? Can't you see that that's what Disrespect has been waiting for? You are like a trick and Disease, Disrespect, Violence, and Death are your hooker. They're screwing you out of your life. How long are you going to let that man that is screaming for justice inside of you be smothered by your ignorance? When are you going to step up like a man and fight those demons that have been beating up on you from the day you were born? You see those drugs you are about to put inside of you? That's about sixty more days you are deleting from your life. You see those fools "Disrespect" and "Violence" that you've been hanging out with? I forgot to tell you that I overheard them talking about how to get you ten more years in the pen. You see that nightmare sitting over there with that black hood on? They call him "Death" and if you make the wrong move behind these walls, Disease, Disrespect, or Violence will bring you to him. You see, there are two forces that run this world. One is called life, the other is called death. What side would you prefer to be on? "Oh," my bad, your actions already revealed to me that answer.

Little boy, I don't know if you've noticed or not, but life is not a game. Life is as serious as that disease that got that poor man too sick to even get up and expose of that waste inside of him. Instead he must expose of it in someone's diaper while the rest is regurgitated from within his mouth. That's all he can do; just sit there in his own embarrassment while disease slowly takes over his immune system slowly bringing him closer to this thing we know as death.

Little boy, life is as serious as that man lying face down unconscious on that sidewalk. He is a victim of this crime we know as robbery and half-beaten to death. It's a sad sight to see, this man waking up, disorientated, just to realize that all that he has worked for has been stripped from him in a slight second. It was a sadder sight when he came from the hospital just to be informed that he suffers from brain damage. This man is a victim to Disrespect.

Little boy, life is as serious as the war over there in Iraq, or should I say violence over there in the Middle East. Can you picture what it feels like to walk corrupted grounds, hoping and praying some idiot don't come and blow you to pieces as a suicide mission? Can you picture what it feels like to be sent to war that you may have not agreed with, just to end up in some Middle East hospital with 15 bullets in your body and the doctor isn't too far sure whether, or not if you're going to make it. All you can do is picture what it would feel like to be back at home and escaped from all this evil we know as violence.

Little boy, life is as serious as that woman lying there on that hospital bed, experiencing death like pains and bleeding half to death just to conceive some big-head child such as yourself. The more she pushes, all she can seem to think about is the miracle she has been blessed to bring into this world. If she had the knowledge back then that she has now, she might have given up a long time ago from pushing a curse such as yourself up out of her. The cold thing about it, ladies and gentleman, is this lady has accepted Death just to let you experience life, and this is how you repay her. Inconsiderate souls, may you one day be delivered from the devil's playground, we know as Disease-Disrespect-Violence-and Death. "Feel my pain."

### CARLOS BALLARDO

With pleasure we bring you Carlos Ballardo, who is a first time writer from Corcoran State Prison. Carlos tells us plenty from the following excerpt (of his letter) he sends us, which follows this intro. Carlos is a father, who wants to see the incarceration cycle stopped, within his family, as he writes with hope that his daughter will see that there is much more than living in and out of the system, something Carlos is very familiar with.

#### Wasted Time

The time I've wasted is my biggest regret...  
Spent in these places I'll never forget

Just sitting and thinking about the things that I've done...  
The crying, the laughing, the hurt, and the fun

Now it's just me and my hard driven guilt...  
Behind a wall of emptiness I allowed to be built

I'm trapped in my body, just wanting to run...  
Back to my youth with it's laughter and fun

But, the chase is over and there's no place to hide...  
Everything is gone, including my pride

With reality suddenly right in my face...  
I'm all alone and stuck in this place

Now memories of the past flash through my head...  
And the pain is obvious by the tears that I shed

I ask myself, why? And where I went wrong...  
I guess I was weak when I should have been strong

Living for the drugs and the wings I had grown...  
My feelings were lost, afraid to be shown

As I look to my past it's easy to see...  
The fear that I had, afraid to be me

I'd always act thuggish, so fast and so cool...  
When actually lost like a blinded, old fool

I'm getting too old for this tiresome game...  
Of acting real hard with no sense of shame

It's time that I change, get out and start a new life...  
Fulfilling my dreams with my daughters and wife

What my future will hold, I really don't know...  
But all the years I've wasted are starting to show

I'm now living for the day to get out and have a new start...  
And fulfill the dreams I hold deep within my heart

I hope I can make it, I at least have to try...  
Because otherwise I'm heading towards death,  
And I don't want to die

#### Dear Beat Within

I'm writing from Corcoran Prison. I recently had the opportunity to read a couple of your issues, and I must say it was a pleasure. I was very impressed and amazed with a lot of the writings I read that were submitted from our youth. So much emotion and feelings put into the writings.

I'm forty years old, and I understand and can relate to some, for at times I feel as they do. It amazes me these youth with so much talent being able to put their thoughts, emotions and feelings into words, a lot of adults can't do that, yet, here are our youths (children) saying as they feel from their hearts, amazing! And your magazine affording them the opportunity to do so is great.

I'm a father, and I really enjoyed your magazine. I have a daughter (who just turn 16), who just got out of juvenile. One minute she makes reckless choices and the next she speaks about getting back on track with her goals. She seems to take two steps forward and then slip one step back. I don't want her to end up like her dad (me), in and out of the system. I don't want her to lose her future, she has too much to offer and I don't want to see her sacrifice and forfeit her entire high school education for no reason.

A lot of these youth have a lot to say on the positive tip, and I would like for her to be able to read them.

I am also enclosing a poem and a small piece I hooked up for your readers.

Thank you for your efforts and what you are doing to reach out to these young ones, I tip my hat to you. God bless!

#### To The Man

To the man... tired to the bone and having less than ten dollars in his pocket. Coming home from work to a house that needs a paint job, a yard that needs mowing, and is full of kids' toys, and screaming children...

To the man who drives an old pick-up that can't last much longer, one that he still owes several payments on...

Who comes home to a wife dressed in old, blue jeans... Who's a little overweight... In a bad mood, wearing no make-up, having uncombed hair, and bad breath....

To the man who's dinner will consist of chicken noodle soup and a hot dog...

From this prison cell from which I'm writing this.  
I say, "God, how I envy you!"

**I'm now living for the day  
to get out and have  
a new start...  
And fulfill the dreams I  
hold deep within my heart**

**CHARLIE MACK** We welcome yet another powerful new teacher/writer in Charlie Mack, who writes us from Pelican Bay State Prison. We do not know too much about this writer except that he is eager to reach out and share his story in The Beat. This is only the beginning, as he delivers hard truths, in your face style, read on!

## Game

Game what,  
game who?  
Game recognizes game.  
You think your hard?  
I am too.  
I do what you do,  
from fighting to spitting stones,  
breakin' ho's, chasin' cash, and  
poppin' the heat.  
The game ain't nothing to me,  
but who are you really "foolin."  
Not that dude you fought,  
not that fool that coped,  
not that girl you got,  
not that money,  
and surely not that bullet you  
shot.  
In the end, you always get  
caught.  
Now it's funk the judge and funk  
the cops.  
Na, nija, funk you!  
You knew right from wrong.  
What's wit' all this thug shhh,  
pimp shhh, gangsta that.  
The road to prison is what you  
should be spittin' in your rap.  
G's up, Ho's down, ha ha.  
I love my women, nija.

You see, ya got it all funk-ed-  
up.  
Your losing to your own "game,"  
playboy.  
You wish this,  
you wish that,  
but what do you do?  
You hope and dream and still  
end up with nothing.  
This is what you do...  
"Pay attention now."  
Don't let it pass you by.....  
"Stop breaking the law," my  
nija~  
Abide by them laws,  
get a jobby job,  
get yourself a nice honey,  
spend money, and live on, son.  
Ain't no fights, ain't no flends.  
Ain't no girls 'cause you got  
yours.  
Ain't no heat,  
no judge,  
or 5-0.  
Imagine that!  
My game is selling like hot  
cakes.  
I be stackin' major chips and  
I'm always the one winning, my  
nija.  
Now that's game.

## Beat

What's good? The name is Charlie Mack. I'm currently stuck on lock down that is.

I came across one of your issues. I'm really diggin' all your support for the young ones. It's sad that all these young adults have to see what they see, and having to feel so much pain in the' souls.

I too was crying out for change and a different road. I'm tired of all these lies and hard times. It's my turn to tell the story. I bail out of this place in a few. I too want to live a better life, away from all the madness.

I want to be able to deliver a message to all these young adults with a little guidance and support. I might be able to save one or two out of the bunch. Every person deserves to smile.

I'd like to give a shout out to all the young men out there to stop and think. You are what makes life happen. If you choose the right way good things will come your way. If you do wrong you'll see what cell you're in, that's "home," will you choose otherwise?

You have the choice, it's like getting your scrilla on, but only this time your getting your freedom on. That's where it's at.

To all my beautiful young ladies, wipe away your tears, there are people who care about you. You're not alone. Think positive and hold your head to the sky. I hope and pray happiness will touch your hearts.

## Every person deserves to smile.

**SLIM** Out of respect for this next writer we are not going to introduce him by his full name given he signed the following piece as Slim. Slim too, is a new contributor to The Beat Within, his letter to the youngstas is as real as it gets. His words are better than any meal offered to you in juvenile. Chew on his words and digest his statements, and then tell us/ tell him what you think.

## To All The Youngsters That Are Torcido, (Locked-Up!)

I know it's hard to be in the position that you are in, but you got to look at it like this: when you get that, (microwave dinner), or what they call it, a "hot tray," you got to be thankful for what you got, because there are kids out there that don't got what you have. They can't have a decent meal. There are people in China that are in prison that get bread and water. That's it!

I've been in a Mexican jail once for being drunk in public. I was in there for three days. Do you know what I ate?? Nothing!! Not one damn thing. Why?? Because they don't give you anything!!

There's a lot more scandalous places than where you're at right now!! This goes out to everybody that's locked-up, adults too!!

I'm here in prison and there are guys in here that

complain about the food they get. If they don't get their cookies in their sack lunch, they start kicking and banging on their door! Picture this, because this is what I see everyday: A dude, 6 foot 7 inches, 200 to 250 lbs., complaining about cookies!?! I just laugh at these cats. It's so weird in here. I feel like telling dude to kick back, but then again, who am I to be telling him what to do, right!?! So, I just worry about myself.

Let me tell you Young-Guns, out there, be thankful for what you got because someone always, no matter what, someone always has it worse than you! Remember, watch out for the people that smile in your face. Take care and God bless...

Oh yeah, one more thing, "don't stress so much; you're going home!" Some people don't have that opportunity anymore. Think about that! I'm gone!

Later!



### SANDRA SAN ANTONIO

We're on a roll, we want to welcome a new writer in Sandra San Antonio who delivers the following letter and two poems from the Monterey County (Jail) Correction Bureau in Salinas, Ca. She too, in her few words to us, sheds plenty of light on her pain that too many of us can relate to. We are honored that she was moved by The Beat Within publication to write us. Now we only hope for her to be inspired when she sees her words in print, as she works on bettering herself with the goal to reunite with her children/family.

#### Alone

Sometimes I find myself falling into a very sad state of mind.

Depression creeps up on me and I have to fight off a wave of tears.

My life feels like a long roller-coaster ride of emotions.

There are ups that are beyond compare, and downs that keep me in complete despair. Then, just when I see the end of the ride coming near,

~woosh~

I'm swept away by a whole new flow of twists and turns.

When does it stop?

But then again, I'm afraid of it stopping and finding myself alone, dazed, and confused.

Alone.

How miserable it is to be alone.

Although I know that I am never really alone,

I think that I just tend to be so stubborn that I refuse to see all that I really have in my life. Isn't it a shame that I had to end-up behind these confining walls before I realized all the wonderful things that I had in my life?

All around me I see women of different races, beliefs, backgrounds, and crimes,

but yet, here we are.

We are all equals in here.

We're all in the same color, eating the same food, and following the same rules.

I'm left wondering why did I ever give up my individuality

to become just another looking number?

#### To Whom It May Concern

I am currently vacationing in the lovely Monterey County Jail year round resort. They have me locked down which gives me plenty of time to think over the reasons I'm here.

Needless to say, they are not good reasons, but they are my reasons and I am here.

I was disowned, by my family, because I am an embarrassment, I haven't seen my four beautiful children in six months and I am alone. No visits, no commissary, few letters.

I'm no rare species, there are several other people in the same boat as me, and worse. But I am not living their lives, I'm living mine and it sucks.

My neighbor showed me a copy of your magazine and I would be very honored if I also could receive one. Your articles I can relate too.

Sincerely...

#### Past Tense

It's in the middle of the night

There's not even one deputy in sight

Whispers come from the other side of the wall

Other than that, there's no noise at all

I close my eyes, but I cannot sleep

I've tried everything, even counting sheep

I'm tired of being here in this place

Tired of pretending and wearing my happy face

I want to feel the wind in my hair

And shower my children with tender love and care,

But I must do time for my offense

Knowing that soon it will all be past tense.

### NEILION

We are honored to share this frightening excerpt of a letter from our old friend Neilion, who was just recently released from Chad/CYA, in Stockton CA, where he served his latest stint for a violation. We have known Neilion for a long time. He was one of the founding writers in The Beat, where he wrote, when incarcerated from every single unit outside of the girls in SF/YGC. Today he is free on parole determined to succeed. Here's his letter...

#### To Whom This May Concern (An Excerpt From A Letter)

I am not writing you to tell that I'm doing fine or ok. I am not writing you to tell you that I am happy, safe, healthy and pure. I'm writing to let you know that what goes on inside the gates of CYA is wrong.

Being here is like a world within a world, they have their own rules, their own form of treatment and education and the worst of it all discipline.

I found it hard to be placed here as a youth because I'm forced to make adult decisions when I'm still a minor. I have to prepare myself for every morning when I wake up, that I will not get rushed and beat up in a riot, or attacked by a youth correctional officer, or even bitten by a dog.

No one from my home knows that I've been harassed by the staff, cursed out and thrown into a lockup cell

sprayed from head to toe with mace.

I haven't had a full meal in two months, because of the low portions that the institution provides.

Last week my visit was canceled because my parents were not in compliance of the dress code for visiting.

I've made several attempts to utilize the grievance system, but every time I write one it gets shot down because they (CYA officials) think I'm lying. I've written to Sacramento and told them that I am in a crisis here. There has already been a couple of deaths here. People are stressed out in their rooms the size of cages. It's driving them crazy because they got so much energy and they stay locked in there room for 23 hours a day!

So if you're headed that way, you better be prepared to deal with the harsh reality of your new home.

Until next time I'll continue to stay up and stay focused, you too!

**SHAUMBA N. JONES**

Our old friend Shaumba N. Jones is back, and we're grateful for that, because we haven't been able to drop him the appreciative letters he deserves, yet we are extremely honored to give him space in the pages of *The Beat* to share a part of him with us all. Shaumba writes us from the Delaware Correctional Center in Smyrna, Delaware. By the way it is Shaumba's goal to organize, promote and raise awareness of *The Beat Within* nation wide upon his release from prison. He has big dreams, and what better person to follow through! Read on and be inspired by the words and poetry of Shaumba N. Jones.

**Peace In My Life**

Peace in my life comes when I put my feet on  
the floor everyday...  
God allowed me to open my eyes and see  
another day....

Peace in my life comes from understanding  
where I've been,  
where I'm going, and what I plan to achieve....

Peace in my life is knowing when I call my kids,  
they say, "daddy, I still LOVE you. Please come  
home...."

Peace in my life is achieved when I realize that  
today, I LOVE ME first and share the rest with  
people who share their love with me....

Peace in my life is reached by gaining a higher  
understanding of my religion, Islam, and my  
prayers five times a day.....

Peace in my life is me understanding that  
prison is nothing but a temporary hold and  
that success can and will be achieved through  
patience and perseverance.

I've gained peace in my life today because I live  
"in" today and "for" tomorrow, and not for, in,  
or, because of yesterday's...

**Handicapped**

Just because a person is physically or mentally disabled or  
challenged doesn't make them any  
lesser of a person than anyone else....

We are all handicapped by being Black, Puerto Rican, Asian, or  
Mexican in America...

Think about it...

We are judged guilty until we prove we are guilty for all we do...  
We can't vote if we are on probation or have felonies.

We can't let our voice be counted in democratic events....

We can't bear arms like the Constitution of the U-S-of-A says  
if you have a felony....

On your job application, it says "-have you been convicted of a  
felony in the past seven years?" That handicaps you, employment-  
wise....

So, for anyone to feel that we got it bad, look at what some really  
handicapped people have to deal with:

People taking their car spaces!

People abuse them in care facilities!

Sidewalks in most places have no access for them!

Financing for health and home-care costs rise so high their  
families have to sometimes be sub-standard in the care they give  
for economic reasons!

And the worst, ignorant people make jokes because of their looks.

I feel like they deserve the best treatment money can buy...

I feel disabled and mentally challenged people deserve to be  
loved... Period...

Some say we are responsible for those we love. Others know we  
are responsible for those who need love...

**Inspiring Quotes**

"Up, you mighty race! You can accomplish what you will!"

**-Malcolm X's Father**

"It is better to be part of a "great whole" than to be the whole of a small part...."

**-Mr. Frederick Douglass**

"The dignity of the individual will flourish when the decisions concerning his life are in his own hands, when he has the means to seek self-improvement.... Then, what will his or her excuse be?"

**-Shaumba N. Jones**

**Home....**

When I think of "Home," I am transported from my 8 by 10 foot cell back to when "life"  
was about family and the support of family....

To the home-cooked meals, home is apple pie with breakfast, sweet potato pie,  
chicken and dumplings, collard greens, and stuffing....

Home is "Red" Kool-Aid when you got "half an inch of sugar in the bottom..."

Home is playin' baseball using the tennis ball, a 2 by 4 board, no gloves, and the fire hydrant as first base...

Home is going for a swim in the Nanticoke River, then fishing in the same river for dinner...

Home is Catfish, Rock fish, large-mouthed Bass, and Sun-perch the size of a 12" inch plate!

Home is where values, morals, and respect are instilled in us as kids and never forgotten...

Home is where every grown-up on your block can whup your tail and your mom  
and dad whup you again for doing what you did in the first place...

Home is the place where "love" is given unconditionally  
and we, as people, no matter what we've done wrong, are not judged...

Only loved more...

That's what "home" is to me....

### SONRISA

Sonrias has been writing to The Beat on and off for years. This next commentary is his thoughts on "Self-Destruction." He does an excellent job defining, sharing and as he says "keeping it real" in this piece. For many of you readers we suggest you get and use a dictionary, given Sonrias will challenge you to think and work to truly understand his piece. In the end, he succeeds with flying colors. Sonrisa writes us from California State Prison Corcoran.

### My Intro

This missive brings another concept called "Self Destruction." I've been doing a lot of brainstorming while my writ of Habeas Corpus is in the Court of Appeal a waiting to be heard. So I've put it onto paper in essence to share my thought process of late... So let me get started, and say again, thank you for your decorous style.

### Self-Destruction

Diligence and perseverance while achieving a dignified lifestyle is a must in order to countermand the caitiff character that brings about self-destruction.

This concept is widely forward as we survive in a life where we find ourselves over-aggressive, moved by inadequate traits, and dedicated to false dreams, hopes, and goals. The incessant ringing of lies and manipulation continues to plague our talents, wants, and genuine desires. I steadily speak about doing stuff in spite and out of false pride without thinking ahead. The general lifestyle of the streets is a grave experience and leads us toward self-destruction before we ascertain the requisite knowledge to escape unscathed. Whether it's doing time, drugs, and criminal acts these is all a one-way road into perpetual self-destruction. Destroying our qualities and positive actions.

The extricate mind from these dark realms can out maneuver and defeat self-destruction. People do not realize the canard endeavors or missives cripples a person's ability to reason and maintain self-discipline in any dilemma. For instance: "All homeboy/girl that fool said blah, blah, blah,' about you.... What you gonna do?...." Most of us without the smarts get sucka'd into something without even investigating and confirming it, or reason(s) why it was said. Instead, like fools, we bite and react with a hast affront, or in cowardice, and I mean literally mean with guns... All too many times we notice people react on frivolous and meaningless causes and we blow-up, "self-destruct," over mere words.... Have we lost our self-

dignity? Have we left a civil world for pride? Or are we just ignorant to the values of life?

The fallacy we perceived now, or previously, could transcend our minds into intelligent thinking if we only took a moment to slowdown and visualize what we are getting into, it also takes a great deal of courage to stand-up for yourself, and remain firm in your own decisions. Insight and keen evaluation is the necessary elements to problem-solving, people should learn to except who they are, "righteously focused with judicious input" self destruction comes in millions of ways and examples only to destroy egos, characters, familial love, friendships, and yes, lives. Impulses are enraged by the littlest things, but yet, cost of priceless years of pain, suffering, and freedom...

Right now, you probably could view and preview a lot, or maybe just one element of self-destruction in your world. Believe in yourself and confront the hindrance. Only you can prevent negativity. Only you can properly choose the formation of your goals. Only you can veer your world much different.

Only you can conquer self-destruction, but the answer is plain and simple. It only starts when you want it too... Impatient people are like time bombs with self-destructive mechanisms. These sort of people are dangerous and reckless for they lack the sound, judgment and the power to master their minds and learn to dissolve the negativity and take it too extremes!

We all get frustrated, angry, and enraged, no doubt, but we all have our own pressure releases that are unique. You just got to search for your process....

Self-destruction is like the grim reaper. It just hangs around in places where people slip up and don't provision a better lifestyle. It follows people who don't greet the effort and work things out. We only self-destruct when we have no ample will power and energy to motivate ourselves. Don't blame anyone else but yourself. Accept the setbacks and inspire yourself to achieve better interest. Don't rot and self-destruct with flaws. Encourage your mind with perpetual dedication in all you do...

Real talk always...

### ALEX PEREZ

no punches.

This issue must be the issue to introduce our readership to new teachers, 'cause here was have Alex Perez, who delivers a hard-hitting poem about life inside prison. Alex writes us from Corcoran State Prison. His poem pulls

### Whispers Are Not Allowed

There are no whispers....  
Not even in the dead stillness of night  
Because whispers are soft and gentle  
And soft and gentle are not allowed here.

Baited breath and lowered voices  
Sure, furtive in their criminal schemes.

You hear what sounds like whispers  
Yet, you know this cannot be  
Nothing soft or gentle exists on this planet

One evening lying there with eyes closed  
Reminiscing and dreaming as always  
A large hand clamps over your mouth

A knee in your gut

Perp leans forward and quietly tells you  
why  
Wait! He was whispering wasn't he?  
No, he can't be.

Eyes grow even larger when you feel the steel  
Enter between your ribs and pierce your heart  
Just before you are alone again

You whisper to yourself  
"Finally, I'm done with this"  
And you smile because deep down inside  
You knew there were still soft and gentle  
Things in your world somewhere.



**ERNIE** The beauty of *The Beat Within* is the opportunity for writers to respectfully step up and share their opinions on various issues that plague their lives such as drugs, gangs, the hood, and prison politics. In this next piece by Ernie, who writes us from California State Prison Corcoran, he carefully expresses his views about those who are displaying the same destructive behaviors as he use to display. Read on and form your own opinion, maybe you'll be challenge as did Ernie to respond, with elegance and respect.

## An Excerpt From A Letter

I've had the pleasure of reading another of your *Beat Within* magazines. It is interesting and inspiring to see people making an effort to express themselves. However, on the other hand, I also got a glimpse of others with an old mind set that I, regrettably admit, once harbored. Therefore, thought it would be important to respond.

This particular piece I am responding to is an old essay that was lost for sometime but recently got circulated, titled, "Choosing Right Is Not Always Right." With your permission I've enclosed a writing, titled, "The Element in Denial."

## The Element In Denial

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith, we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so what is seen was not made out of what was visible."

Such a short yet, most meaningful passage, can only be digested by a person whom is spiritually receptive. It's regrettable that this includes very few in comparison to the numbers that are out there when we are all instilled with the ability to tap into this amazing source that opens our beings into an entirely different dimension of life. This unfortunate truth has been the result of a cycle that was created by a "few, misdirected heads," leaning on their own understanding, inclinations, and views of the world that have influenced a many number of men and youth.

According to their standards, to be a spiritual person, or a warrior, as they like to put it, is restricted to being willing to put one's life in danger and denote very little appreciation for the life of another. All being for the sake of demonstrating a good front of bravado and support in the midst of egotistical, arrogant, and a paranoid bunch pursuing their own selfish ambitions.

There is not doubt that there are quite a few heads that are very observant and talented, but what does it matter if the perspective and approach to "life" is all wrong?

These dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority, and slander celestial beings.... These men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals- these are the very things that destroy them.

It does not matter how observant or talented people are if they fail to have foresight and a keen sense of the higher dynamics at play in life. They will fail to develop their vision and conform their actions in the "right direction," according to the times and evolvement of "our society."

This is the case with the number of men that have been chasing their own directive; all the while crying foul play against a system that is squelching their advances. These men propagate the injustice and inequality that is taking place that has stemmed from years past, and even go as far as embracing other cultural roots at the expense of the present age's governing bodies advocating hate, alienation, and recalcitrance with their every thought and action. By their own ways, they promote a circumvention of society, yet, want to be treated as insiders when it becomes convenient or facilitates their "twisted objective." It doesn't work that way!

There comes a time in a true selfless and progressive person's life when he has to humble himself, admit his wrong, his failure, and or shortcoming and repair the rest of the life he has left. This is not to say that one continues in the same mind frame. This will only result in the same cycle. It takes a sincere and honest search within. Not in comparison to your objective or subjective reasonings, but in light of life's higher process and the divinity that sustains all life form.

Every one of us caught-up in the system is here as a result of wanting to do things our way and on our terms, never mind everything else. In this little pocket of ourselves is by which we reason and want all else to fall into conformity. This is arrogance for our own history denotes our short-ranged and destructive nature. It is not until we come to realize that only by letting go will we be able to obtain.

Now, this brings me to my next portion.... "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." What does this mean exactly? It means that those things that we really want and refuse to let go off, for the sake of getting our way, are the things that we will lose. Ponder this for a moment. Since we've been adolescents, we've been pursuing the things that life has to offer by our own terms, chasing the dream more on desire and self-absorption than in true wisdom and knowledge. As adults, we've taken it to a different level. However, the same spinning of the wheels continue because unbeknown to you, you've never developed the other traits and qualities that make you a fuller and richer being. For the most part, everyone has been so caught up in hate and fear over the tumbles and hardships that envelope your lives that any sense of meaningful gains has been drowned-out. Your lives are so charged up for the moment that it's your own actions that are crippling and dehumanizing you.

In spite of the cry for "justice and equality." It is your own treatment of yourselves that brings about the worse of "injustice and inequality." You're stubbornness, your lack of reasoning, your lack of faith and reliance on violence over exhaustion of processes is what is robbing you of life, worth, respect, virtue, and spirituality. For that matter, next time any utterance of the way the system is exploiting you comes out of your mouths, consider first the way you exploit each other. I do not say this to justify the surreptitious tactics that some top heads in the system use with impunity; for their lack of respect for human life, albeit regardless of how lost the life may be, is wrong. Nonetheless, they are only successful because it is your ignorance that allows it. For example: No one would be able to play on prejudice if it didn't exist. A man couldn't be enticed into doing drugs if he didn't indulge in the first place. A man of scruples and substance cannot be enticed into doing something that is unbecoming of his principles and character regardless of circumstances, etc. The same is said about "the pinning of people against each other." It is your ignorance and hate that makes it possible.

It is not until you really learn the meaning of truth and walk in it that you will grasp that operating in half-truths is solely crippling you. Regardless, if the system uses half-truths as well, they will seize to be effective. Truth is what will bring you out of the little psychological box... to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires to be made anew in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

When and if any of you come to realize the profoundness of this message, you will no longer look at others whom are seeing through all the chaos and stepping from the darkness into "the light" as undesirables. As it is that your frame of mind dictates, but as courageous souls leaping into the unknown by "faith" with a strong hope for something better than the plate being served at your table, for in spite of one's place or destination and intentions, the deeper in the quagmire (difficult situation) one has gone the stronger, the struggle and greater the sacrifice to climb out of it.

This is not condoning the selfish and lost souls whom pursue wasteful lives, but those brave souls "taking the leap of faith" embracing what will be as opposed to what was, for what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Therefore, let go of the narrow-thinking, crumb-chasing mentality and accept accountability for your misdirected way that is now reaping the effects of the ramifications that accompany a ship that was not built right and has imploded in mid-sea. Fight the good fight and let "the word" reveal to you the many facets that a true warrior spirit possesses, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved....

"For God did not send his son, (Christ), into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only son, (Christ)."

### HARROLD JOHNSON

Harrold Johnson has been busy studying for the finals he had to take to finals the English and Philosophy courses he was taking through UC Berkeley, not to mention working and playing soccer. So, he had to take some time off from writing to The Beat. Well, the wait was well worth it, and we're always happy to wait for someone who's using their time to such positive ends. Harrold writes us from California State Prison, Solano in Vacaville, CA.

#### Swept Away

Time.

My best friend, yet my worst enemy.

Lost forever, yet never ending.

Time is a river,

and I just happen to be caught in its current.

A current which never stops.

Which never slows down.

Time passes from things that don't yet exist,  
through things that can't endure,  
into things which no longer exist.

In time you can build a life,

tear it down,

and build it up again.

Time doesn't care what you do with it,

because it's not going anywhere.

It's right there

carrying you along with its current.

You can try to fight it.

You can kick it, paddle,

and splash your little heart away,

all in vain.

Time slows, stops, nor speeds up for anybody.

We are all at Father Time's disposal.

#### Locked Up

The frustration is building to its capacity.

To say anything is futile.

Not to say anything is just as bad.

Trapped!

What do I do?

Where do I turn?

It's time for this journey to end.

I have gotten all I can get out of this soil.

It is time to find more fertile land to harvest my future.

#### A Brother's Love

I'm blamed for things I didn't do.

I'm blamed for things I should have known.

I'm only human, I can only do so much.

Why can't you see the love I've shown?

The things you thought were shallow,

Were done with the deepest sympathy.

You say you care, but it doesn't show.

I don't need your stress; I need your empathy.

How can you be so selfish and only think of you?

You really have no idea what your words put me through.

I already have enough on my plate.

I don't need more anger to fuel my hate.

To make me more aggressive than I already am.

For some poor bastard to say something stupid, then, bam!

I can't afford no more trouble.

I'm trying to get back home.

This ain't where I belong, I'm tired of being alone.

Stand up on your own two feet.

It's time to be a man.

Stop making up or using excuses.

It's time for "you" to understand.

**Time doesn't care  
what you do with it,  
because it's not  
going anywhere.**

### THE REAL ONE

The following piece was sent along to us by a writer named Will, who calls himself The Real One. He describes the challenge of being Black in today's society, and the struggles to come into his identity as a Black man. Further, he encourages other Black men, young and old, to realize that it is on them to make their situation better — though he argues that society will never accept Black men for who they are, he states that it is incumbent upon those Black men to make things better for themselves and their brothers. Will writes from CSATF in Corcoran, California.

#### Soul Food For Thought

It amazes me when I think about the things that we take for granted, we being Black men in this case. For one, our social freedom. For those who are unaware, allow me to explain why I use the term social freedom.

With Black people freedom comes in stages. We're either free to do this, or free to do that, but never totally free. A conscious Black person knows that in the world such as it is today, for a Black person, total freedom comes only in death and no other way.

I myself have struggled in the past trying to maintain a balance between being Black, and being what I thought would be socially accepted, until finally I realized that being Black will never be socially accepted, only tolerated to

a certain extent. Which is why in every aspect of our being, we must stay a step ahead of our adversaries who now come in blackface, as well as you know what. Mind, body, and soul we must be strong; we must stay strong! We must feed our young knowledge, knowledge of themselves, embrace them with true love and dedication — only then can we at least make this hell on earth bearable for them.

I wrote once before on how the Black man of today, his only legacy to his son is how to be a player or pusher or pimp — it's pathetic. We're not even conscious of our surroundings. We've been infiltrated from every angle. We no longer strive to improve ourselves; too busy trying to prove ourselves. Our intellect is faulty, and we remain loyal only to destroying each other.

## THE NEVER FORGET MINISTRY

We are so grateful to have Baridi Williamson, Sangu Jones, Richard Razor Johnson, and Noelle Marie of The Never Forget

Ministry drop us their fine lines of wisdom. These elders have stepped up huge with their poetry and thoughtfulness. For a couple of years now the Never Forget Ministry has embraced us readers with love and support. The Never Forget Ministry writers send their creative thoughts and ideas from the SHU in Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. Until their next batch, read on!

### Untitled

*(Information is power . . .*

*Applying information is knowledge . . .*

*Knowledge is awareness . . .*

*Applying awareness is consciousness . . .*

*Consciousness is enlightenment . . .*

*Applying enlightenment is wisdom . . .*

*Real wisdom is truth!)*

Our children and youth are real people who are born with real inalienable human rights to be free to live and grow up in a world that guards their innocence, protects their lives, and guarantees them the human right to enjoy a real quality education, employment, and life of happiness.

It is time for all humans here on this planet to take a stand and DEMAND these human rights be placed at the top of humanities list of priorities: to secure a safe, hopeful, and brighter future for our children/youth.

Here, in the United States, we find those in positions of power to rule over the majority of people in this country, they do not place the value of our children/youth at the top of their governing order, and the children/youth know this, because they are e smarter than we think. They know that deep within their nature that things just ain't right. Just as the late Tupac Shakur, "this is not how my life is supposed to be . . ."

Our children/youth are our future and there is no future for us unless we invest in our children/youth. This future investment must begin with us listening to everything that our children/youth have to share with us. We must do this even if we may not agree with all of their views, etc., but they have the right to be the best person that they can grow to be.

Today, our children/youth need to know, feel, and believe that their presence in this world means something. That their views, concerns, interests, feelings, etc., do count in our society, and even when they see some adults not being accountable towards making sure that there is a real change taking place to guarantee our children/youth have a brighter future, this does not mean that all of the adults have given up on our beautiful, bright, and struggling young people and that there are some of us in this world who shall continue to fight, struggle, and demand real change in the conditions that are constantly keeping our children/youth and peoples' suffering, hopeless, self-destructing, because their dreams, ideas, and creativity is being smothered, snuffed out, repressed, chained, and imprisoned.

We know because we too have faced this same cold, harsh reality as young people.

Dedicated To Our Endangered Youth

From: Survivors reborn, and arisen from the ashes of self-destruction

Never Forget Ministry

### A Note To The Beat

Greetings and blessings to you all there at The Beat Within. We trust that this mailing find you in good spirits and continuing to find fulfillment in your commendable work and service there, to reach and help our young people discover and utilize their creative ideas, energy, and powers to effect real change "within," so to really change the negative, destructive conditions around them. We know this reality all too well, and have been blessed with a functional comprehension of just how important it is for our youth to be well informed with accurate information to move them along as "truth seekers" on a journey to learn knowledge of self, rediscover their humanity, affirm their dignity, and assert a true meaning to their life and it's direction.

Well, it's been a short while since we've been blessed with the opportunity to reach out to our good friends there at The Beat and share ourselves with the young people, who we see heading down that same fast lane, self destructive path, we likewise ventured only to find ourselves with a one-way ticket to prison, or the mortuary, yet we survived and this is the message of truth and hope that we offer the youth today, who faces endangerment.

Here is some creative expression by our Never Forget Ministry...

Respectfully,

-Baridi Williamson

**our children/youth  
need to know, feel,  
and believe that  
their presence in  
this world means  
something.**

### *If Only . . .*

If only I had thought before I acted...

If only I had listened to my first mind...

If only I could have seen it coming...

If only I would have listened to the wise elders...

If only I could have seen it coming...

If only I could turn back the hands of time...

If only I had another chance!

-Baridi Williamson



## THE NEVER FORGET MINISTRY (CONT.)

**Fate can't be measured  
in success  
Success is seen in  
its existing state**

### *(Keepin' It Real . . .) Embracing Life's Truth-Seeking Spirit*

Letting go of our inhibitions of fear  
And embracing truth as our friend....  
Seeking knowledge of self-heritage, and dignity  
And allowing the truth-seeking journey to begin....  
Opening the mind's inner eye with an attentive ear  
And quietly focusing on the spirit's voice within.

Listening to your heart and soul's drumbeat  
Calling you to do the right thing and be brave...  
Taking it one step at a time and being patient  
Knowing there are precious lives to be saved.

Feeling the inner spirit awaken to enlighten our path  
Guiding us safely from harm's way and evil's wrath...  
Moving positively forward with new creative energy  
Helping life make changes from the old to the new me.

Becoming as one with the universe's natural order  
No longer trapped, locked in a space with its border...  
Reaching within and recognizing our inner beauty  
Reaching for the light of truth as our inner duty.

Making well thought-out decisions toward  
Fulfilling our life's purpose....  
Gaining confidence along the way  
By looking for truth beneath the surface....  
Learning when, where, and how to use life's freedom spirit key  
Unlocking the mysteries that answers questions of what's meant to be....  
-Sangu Jones

### **Had We Known**

We hesitated when opportunity prevailed  
Only to move forward and excel  
Time started our ability for continuity  
This was quickly removed with surity  
Unseen love was always there before our eyes  
Lacking in the ability to harness the skies  
Fate can't be measured in success  
Success is seen in its existing state  
The fact of our present shows it's never too late  
Had we known the truth of our destiny  
The steps forward could have been understood  
Bridging, replacing, and countering all hindrances  
Understanding truth is the key to unlock all mysteries  
To simplify the meaning of our true presence here, our purpose  
Is to look and search deep within the mind, heart, and soul  
And unlock the chains, free our true-selves  
Then, all will be made decidedly visible to the eyes.  
-Richard Razor Johnson

### *Emotional Feelings Resurface*

I feel like I could flow  
On paper  
That what I see in my mind  
Is capable of insinuating itself  
Into someone else  
I think it is the urge  
To share myself with others  
That stops me  
I used to enjoy it even  
Sometimes I have this  
Feeling  
That I'm keeping my writing  
Inside  
I've managed to squelch it  
In me  
For some reason  
I want to feel that fire  
Of the characters  
In my head  
Burn, starkly black  
Against the bright, white paper  
Because if I'm sharing myself  
On paper  
There isn't the danger  
Of personal relationships.

-Noelle Marie



## **LADARO PENNIX**

Ladaro Pennix, an inmate in Pelican Bay, is one of The Beat Without's OGs, who in response to a friend's request, has written an essay on how children need consistent guidance and affection throughout their growing up years. If kids are left all day long to raise themselves up, they get used to their freedom and it's almost impossible for parents to reassert control over them again. Pennix warns that if you allow your child to raise him/herself, he or she may become the adult who he or she wants, not who you, the parents, would choose or design your kids to become.

### *How Do We Deal With The Generation Of Our Sons?*

Our today's sons are growing up far more faster than their parents and their parents' parents ever did. The today's sons are far more independent, strong-willed, rebellious, intelligent, curious and much more mature than what many parents realize. The reason is because most of our today's sons are forced to be that way due to environmental stimuli induced by upbringing and social influence. Such influence and upbringing creates a forced condition that speeds up the process of their mental growth, causing them to grow up before their time.

That leaves little room for the parent to instruct their child's mind towards their own wills, dreams and endeavors that they desire for their child. You cannot work eight hours a day, leaving your child home alone to grow up by his/herself and expect that child to be the same when you get back. Leaving a child home alone for eight hours a day, without constant parental supervision, is like putting an untrained dog that's unleashed in the back yard with the gate open and telling it to stay in the yard as you're walking in your house. What is the possibility that that dog will obey orders and stay in that back yard? Slim to none.

It's the same as a child who is left in the home eight hours a day, unsupervised. That child's curiosity causes him to explore and before you know it, your child is out there in the streets, doing grown-up things that are far beyond his years. As they get older, they adapt to their eight hours of freedom, their rebellious independence and find themselves forming an identity that is completely foreign to the parents, and their child no longer is their child, but a complete stranger, living in their house, like rodents who occupy a house uninvited. Here is when the

parents must make a decision and either accept or reject the stranger who was once their naïve, innocent child.

To accept this new stranger usually leads to an assortment of difficulties that strains the relationship between the child and parent, because the new identity may not be appealing to the parent, which will cause many clashes between parent and child.

To reject this new stranger will only make the relationship between them even worse, which may very well drive the child away from the home and creates the most profound tension imaginable. So what can you do?

When the stranger state occurs, the parent must then take control, yet have an open mind for compromise, so that the child doesn't feel completely restrained or imprisoned within his/her own home. When a child is of age to make his own decisions, (eighteen or older,) the parent should accept that because, whether his/ her decision agrees with the parent or not, the child is no longer a child, but an adult, and must wield his/her own destiny. For, in truth, it's that child's (adult's) life and not the parents' responsibility to make the decisions over their child's life anymore.

If you cannot give your child constant supervision in the home twenty-four hours a day, then you must expect what's to come from such neglect. The world today is a much faster-moving and growing place. It is the age of technology and the boom of today's sons who are selfish, rowdy, smart, uninhibited and full of energy. If constant supervision is not directed towards today's sons in their tender years, which are the best times to shape and mold their infant minds, then one should not be surprised if the stranger who appears in the image of the child in his/her later years. Think about that the next time you look at your child.

## **HALLE TILLERY**

County.

Halle Tillery used to be a consistent Beat writer and workshop participant in San Francisco's YGC. Unfortunately, he's moved into the adult system and is writing us from the county jail in Santa Clara

**you're a  
beautiful person  
Inside and out  
with a lasting  
charm of a  
diamond under  
a rock.**

### *Two Kinds Of Beauty*

Sweetheart you are so beautiful to me.  
You have two kinds of beauty.  
Your outward appearance.  
Sweetheart don't be concerned about  
The outward beauty that depends  
On jewelry, or clothes or hair arrangements.  
Sweetheart, because you're a beautiful person  
Inside and out with a lasting charm of a diamond under a rock.  
Sweetheart, don't let no one tell you  
you're not beautiful with a kind heart  
You got I want, you so close it's  
Like you're in my pocket.  
There are two kinds of beauty  
One is yo' outer appearance, second is your heart  
Which is so precious to me  
So here's some reasons why you have  
Two kinds of beauty.

This goes out to Sadies, but also to every woman out there who thinks she's ugly inside and out.

### KOJO SABABU MUHAMMAD

With this brief introduction by Kojo Sababu Muhammad, we introduced to witness to history. Kojo, who is a fine writer himself, judging by his letter, sends us a letter from his father (unnamed) who reveals how the Crips Gang was born (and if you think Big Tookie Williams is its founder, prepare to be surprised), and how it was perverted from something positive into something negative. He answers his son's question (and our contest question — unfortunately, too late for the contest) about what he would do over, and how. We hope to read more of this talented writer. Kojo sends us his father's remarkable letter, and writes us his own from California State Prison at Corcoran.

### Introduction

My name is Kojo Sababu Muhammad, and I am a prisoner, currently serving LWOP (Life Without Parole) for involvement in a gang-style murder. I've been incarcerated since I was fifteen years of age, first in YA, then prison.

I'm writing you this letter to commend you all for the work that you are doing with juveniles. It's the job that the public school has failed to do, i.e. educate or bring out the gifts and talents of the youth, so that it can be used to help others.

I would like to start sharing some of my father's work with you all. He is a prolific writer who has written several books that I know of, but published none due to his inability to establish a solid working relationship with someone outside.

The first is from a ten-chapter book he wrote week. Also, I posed the question to him that you asked in Vol. 9.10 for the contest: What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over, and how would you go about doing it?

### Dear Son

I am always astonished by the range and depth of your questions to me, especially those that fall into the historical category, or those that demand an intense look at life through the spectacles of the past — at the who, what, why and when of things.

It's almost as if you're beseeching me to go back and analyze the pros and cons of my life, or the chain of causes and effects that constitute my persona.

I don't know what the underlying motives are that inspired you to ask about my past, nor do I know how my response will help you. However, I have thought your questions over, and this is my response to the first part: What have I done in my life that I wish I could do over, and how would I go about doing it?

First of all, this bipartisan question can be answered on the surface in a simple and direct way in three paragraphs:

One, I caused my mother (your grandma) a lot of undeserved heartache, worry, stress and pain... if she were still alive, I'd apologize and beseech her forgiveness.

Two, I ran away from home at the age of eight, and for thirty years tried to justify my actions by laying the blame on everything and everyone except me, and my unwillingness to compromise with my moms and pops. If I could, I'd go back and relive those years, as I now realize that one's primary years, 1-14, are vital to one's experiences as an adult.

By that, I mean this, son. By the time a child is 8, 9 and 10 years old, s/he has developed a sense of the world or life that resists all forms of alteration (except those caused by extreme circumstances). It is from this early understanding of life that one draws their stability. This is why parents try to provide their children with early exposure to music, art, language and other nationalities. They are trying to guarantee their children a future.

In essence, when a child's sense of life is altered by society or by adverse circumstances, that child will have a hard time readjusting.

Last, but not least, I helped start one of the largest gangs in the world, an organization that has become one of the most debased, demoralizing, demonic weapons ever given to the wickedly wise. If I could, I'd tell every Crip the truth about the Crip Organization. I would groom each and every one of the kids I recruited in such a way that would

produce the best in them.

Let me build on this for a bit, as I believe that this (my gang life) is at the root of your question, so I'll open up that chapter for you...

First of all, I, like most children today, ran away because I didn't feel that moms understood me. I didn't feel that she listened to me or tried to get an understanding of what I was going through. Plus I had got fed up with trying to talk too a belt and slammed door. So I ran away, first a few blocks, then to another part of town, then to another city altogether.

This running process was twofold. First, I was running from my parents' lifestyle, and the mindset that they had imposed, a righteous mindset that was in total contrast to the wicked machinations of the streets. Plus, I was running from myself.

See, back in the day, the game was serious. You couldn't be in the streets and be no punk. You couldn't be in the streets thinkin' like no child. You had to be cold-blooded, ruthless and unforgiving. Thus, you had to divorce your emotions from the immediate purpose — survival.

Needless to say, I realized early on that I was crossing over into a world of lawlessness, violence and deceit, where fear and cowardice are tools that can and will be used against you.

But let's back up a little. As I stated, my reason for running in the first place was because I wanted an alternative adult to listen to me, explain the vulgarities of life, and advise me on the ways of the world, beyond that of the upper middle class (remember that your grandparents were kinda rich).

Anyway, I found someone to talk too, a brotha that I thought was solid and truly concerned with my point of view. Just so happens that he was a Crip, "the Crip of Crips," Raymond Lee Washington.

Nowadays, folks pay homage to Stanley "Big Tookie" Williams, as the Supreme Commander of the Crip Organization. But I know different, first 'cause I was there in August of 1969 when it started; second 'cause I helped write the play book; and third because I know that Big Tookie didn't become a Crip until 1972 — and any righteous OOG will tell you that.

Anyway, the point is that I thought I had found a friend that I could admire and look up to. I was wrong. However my instinct for survival wasn't that deeply ingrained yet. Thus, I could not see that I was just an actor in a play,



**KOJO SABABU MUHAMMAD (CONT.)**

*continued from previous page*

its script existing only in Raymond Lee's head.

But I came to the realization, and as a result, ended up just like Raymond Lee — cold, ruthless, shrewd and tactical. The other runaways I came in contact with were seen as other souls balanced on the threshold of life.

Raymond had once told me that "People are like tools; they can either be used for and by you, or against you..." He also told me something that sticks with me to this day: "A good teacher is not recognized by how good he can lead somebody else, but by how well everybody else follows his/her lead..."

Suffice it to say, I became a leader and a damn good one. By 1972, I was amongst the top 100 Crips on the East Side, and a Godfather on the West Side.

As a leader, it was our duty to set up chapters in every 'hood, starting at the local high schools and junior hi's.

It was our duty to tutor, assist, train and educate other kids, to "school 'em" in the arcane arts of "Gangsta Crippin'" — this entailed the tactical arts such as snatch and grab, till tappin', target take downs (beat downs), evade and escape, and other key survival tactics. We had to know how to do hot zone insertions into other 'hoods that were being cultivated by other gangs, because from '72-'76, the agenda was "proliferation."

Thus, things took on new meaning and responsibilities, new weight. See, when I was just a "Baby Crip," the duties and responsibilities were on those a few years older — 15, 16, 17 and 18. However, when I became a leader and recognized force, it was different. And I had to prove that I could lead and fight. So I made my crew fight and practice all the elements of "our thang," on a daily basis.

By 1975, I had a 28-person group that was totally integrated, a squad that could think and act as one, and would protect each other against all enemies (which turned out to be kids' parents sometimes). Anyway, my mission profile was tight. I taught kids under me (especially runaways) that our gang was everything, and that like the Mafia, in the very act of getting jumped in, we were taking a blood oath to each other — thus the title, "Cus," the short of cousin, and the acronym for "Conscious Urban Soldier."

Understand, son, that at the beginning, everything was positive and full of meaning. However, the OC5 (Original Five Crips) decided that negative actions and misinformation was more attractive to kids. Thus,

a cease and desist order was given at the weekend meeting, and from 1975 till the present, the art of lies and deceit were used.

Each night, I'd tell the runaways in my gang that with me, they'd be okay, regardless of the fact that we didn't have actual family or a mature adult looking out for us and our best interests.

Understand, son, that within the circles of deception, there are no straight lines of truth. Thus, I had to have brains, tact and shrewdness to run my 'hood.

Needless to say, by 1975, I had purged my mind of both the acquired shackles of religion and instinctive fear of death that most people have. I had totally replaced my emotions and humanity with a precise model of what I thought a Crip soldier should be, and I was so wedded to that vision that I became a hostage to it.

See, son, if you don't have an essence or personality of your own, you imitate other people's character, style and mannerisms. Needless to say, this is what a lotta kids are doing today. They are looking to actors, rappers and sports stars for an essence. They are seeking escape and expression in music that stresses a negative message, and this creates more problems — problems that they seek resolutions to in drink, sex, drugs, and violence.

So, in response to your question, or the last part of your question, "How would you go about doing it over," I'd teach them to love. I'd teach them to see the positive, and strive to be as positive as they can in every situation. I'd teach them the art of conflict resolution so that they could face and overcome all their problems. I'd strive to educate them in the deepest sense of this world. In other words, I'd work to show them the best in themselves, and help them to manifest the best for the greater good of all.

I'd tell them that they don't have to die for the 'hood, but could live for the 'hood, and that if they lived for good, the 'hood would remember them as heroes and heroines — and that through their spirits, good deeds and actions, they could perpetuate life. I'd prepare them to change the world and expand the meaning of life.

I would tell them how I made my choice to use my voice and make a difference. I would tell them I love them.

Hopefully, it wouldn't be too late.

Love, your father.

**See, Son, if you don't have an essence or personality of your own, you imitate other people's character, style and mannerisms.**

### SIR TURTLE

Sir Turtle is back! This dedicated Beat writer drops a host of lines on us from the SHU in Corcoran State Prison. Lately, he's been writing songs and poetry in addition to his usual missives and is getting better with each submission. Our deepest apologies to him for receiving his contest entry late — we're only human. We hope you enjoy the following abundance of pieces from the thoughtful Sir Turtle

#### Baby Chola

(Chorus)

Hey baby chola you got me soooo hypnotized,  
By your sweet little smile on your pretty face  
That you don't seem to realize.  
I'm talking about you beautiful.

(Verse One)

I remember when I first saw  
you when you had your shades on looking like a chola  
You made my mind think back to the days  
and that's what made me write this firme ass rola.  
Your voice is so soft and sweet as you speak,  
Making my heart skip like a million beats,  
You got me in a love-hypnotizing spell thinking of those luscious  
lips,  
watching you walk on by swinging those sexy hips.  
Yup, just don't seem to realize!

(Verse Two)

'Cause when you walk into a room  
your eyes sparkle and shine as bright as the sun,  
all I want to know is the things that you like to do for fun.  
I want to tell you how much you mean to me  
as my words starts to form,  
'cause when you spoke to me in your sweet voice  
you calmed me down like a quiet storm.  
You're like a sweet beautiful little rose  
so soft and delicate with a perfume  
that smells like peaches as its fragrance flows into my nose.  
I've been checking you out from a distance  
telling myself I never knew a queen like you existed.  
Baby chola you got me soooo hypnotized.

(Repeat Chorus 2x)

(Verse Three)

Baby chola, when I see or look at you face to face  
I see the love in your eyes  
'cause it's like that oldie song called, "Confessing A Feeling,"  
that makes my heart really cry.  
There's something that's contagious about you  
that's true,  
so please explain to me  
how can I get a little closer to you?  
You're on my mind day and night,  
wishing I could hold you oh so tight,  
you're like those cholas on the streets  
looking so fine and sexy and so, so, so sweet.  
Look at what you are doing to me!

(Verse Four)

Mi saludos and respetos to you mi senorita,  
when you were growing up I bet you had some hard times  
as tu familia said pobrecita.  
Baby chola let me be your Spanish king  
'cause with you by my side we can conquer this world of love  
like a Yaqui King and a Aztec Queen.  
The sight of you makes my heart fill with so much joy  
so keep this in mind baby chola as I sing this song to you  
'cause I'm a man and not a little boy.  
Can I help it, if you're the one that my heart wants to reach out to  
But under this predicament it's hard for a dream to come true  
One that's sweet and beautiful like you?  
'Cause a woman like you got me so hypnotized  
but I can tell that in your mind that you don't seem to realize  
(Repeat Chorus)

## under this predicament it's hard for a dream to come true

### The Subject Of The Three Strike Law

Greetings OG's, and boys and girls. This is Sir Turtle coming to you from the SHU in Corcoran State Prison. I am going to try to explain the three strike laws to you and where it started from, that, many of you don't know. But first let me explain something to you guys, I'm not like E-Money, Jason Tréas, The Poetic Prisoner, Michael Markhasev, Professor Black Mind or Wardog, so I'm going to try to explain the best way I can, ok?

Now as for the three strikes, it started in my hometown in Fresno, CA., and I think that the Three Strikes Law should be for all the violent criminals in California. The man who wanted the three strikes law was because his daughter got raped and killed on Blackstone and Shields Ave., and he wanted to avenge his daughter's death so he decided to come up with that law.

Now that law has gotten way out of hand in this California state and the state don't care if you're a juvenile or adult — once you do something that's wrong, the court will give you a second chance, but if they see you in court again and again, they will be like, "You just don't want to listen!" And some of you might get lucky and go to Camp or get on probation and that should tell you something and that is that you need to get your act together and obey the law.

I know this one White dude that I was with in Lancaster State Prison and he has priors of stealing credit cards and on his 3rd strike they gave him 15 years to Life, and to me, that ain't right. Yet, if you all are going to complain what's fair and what's not fair in the law, then don't do the crime if you can't handle the time.

The Three Strikes Law should make you wake up and realize that if you do something hecka, hecka bad then you'll get what's coming, but there are ways to avoid that law and that's to get off Satan's streets and find something more positive to do with your life! It might make your family proud that your doing something good in life, so why don't you leave all that gangbanging, dope selling, pimping, hanging on the block with the homies and robbing and stealing alone, 'cause if you don't then Satan already won your soul in life.

Well I'm out so until next time, much respect to all in the system. God Bless.

## **SIR TURTLE (CONT.)**

### **Things I Would Do Over**

The things I did in my life that I'm wishing I could do all over is going to school, not getting into trouble with the law and getting away from the gang life style.

First, I would have liked to stay in school to become a better and more educated person 'cause with all the schooling that I would have had, I could have become a successful human being in this world. With an education, I could have gotten to higher places with all the knowledge I learned in school and to achieve all the goals I wanted to have in life, and to receive my high school diploma as my family looks at me with a proud look in their eyes and hearts.

Second thing is I would have listened to my family and followed the rules that were being taught to me, and instead of being stubborn and not listening I would have amounted to something. But me being ignorant, I said, this is my life and I'll do what I want and you can't stop me. If I had listened, I know that I would never be locked up in Juvenile Hall, Group Homes, California Youth Authority, and this man made hell called "California State Prison." I could be out there with family, friends and having fun and doing anything I wanted to do in my 29 years of life. I could go to the movies, go to the park, to the big Fresno fair, the circus, cook my own breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I

could talk on the phone, go to work, sleep when I want to sleep, enjoy birthdays, Eaters, Fourth of Julys, Cinco De Mayo's, Valentines Day, St. Patrick's Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. But now all I could do is just wish I should've listen.

Third thing is that I would go back in time when I got into gangs and realized that I could be better off without gangs in my life. I seen so many homies (homeboys and girls) die right in front of me from different sides of town. I always wanted to prove I was down and couldn't be messed with at all. But now I see that it's just what Satan wants us to do and that is play his game and kill each other for stupid stuff. I also realized that by being in a gang, I was just signing my own death warrant to the Grim Reaper, and now that I'm finally out of that gang lifestyle I don't have to worry about playing the devil's game, 'cause now I live for my one and only master and that our Lord Jesus Christ that is in Heaven, seated on the right hand of his Father. By living for the Lord, He helped me break the chains that I was bind to with the devil. Amen.

Now I leave you with this saying: Romans 15:7 "wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Genesis 9:6: "Whosoever shed's man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God he made man."

## **I would have liked to stay in school to become a better and more educated person**

### **Life In The Pen**

Lonely days doing time

In a far off world where the sun really shines

Gun towers mark the out of bounds

Jiggling keys and slamming doors is the only sound

Many races from different neighborhoods

Mexicans, Blacks, Asians, Indians, and Whites

Every race is split into their own cars

But God's Christmas soldiers

are straight gangsters by far

The Mexicans got the north and south, Asians got their own,

Indians got their own as well; the Blacks got the bloods and crips

But mostly the White boys don't trip

Claiming grounds like handball courts

Blind spots like the sally ports

Everybody here wants to have so much control

And not everyone wants to hit the hole

Day by day just staying strong

Until the air says something's wrong

All the races like to ride down to death to save their pride

They will play where the sun really shines on the line

Up at five and down at ten

Another day in this sad corrupted and crazy pen

Caught up in this inner mix

Throwing spreads and busting flicks

From the line to the hole where the riders play

A different world where the righteous stay

Against all odds but solid as gold

Hearts of fire in a place that's cold

To really fail in here

You're sure to fail everywhere

You're labeled no good behind these walls

Because in prison you're sure to fall

Concrete beds and plastic trays

Where there's a will there's always a way

A threat to the situation and safety of others

Locked up in that scandalous and corrupted SHU with all your brothers

You and I are both the same

Schooled to play this deadly and stupid game

Shoes and socks till darkness falls

No guarantee behind these prison walls

Slip on shoes and boxer shorts

Weekly pools on TV sports

God's Christmas with hopeful hearts

That's where a strong spirit starts

A hateful man who built this place

Took the warm sun and everybody's walking space

There's a cage to bust a sweat

Three hours is all the time you get

Shift change comes and showers start

Dinner comes and I hear the carts

Lonely days doing so much time

In a place where the sun really shines

Life in the pen



**what you really don't know about the  
sinful life that I lead  
you see you can really hurt in the long run**

## **SIR TURTLE (CONT.)**

### ***Hell And Heaven***

(Chorus)

I'm standing before the devil and God  
looking at the book of my evil and good  
deeds

as the devil looks with a smile  
as I'm losing faith with God as my heart  
bleeds.

I tell the Lord that His kingdom in heaven  
is what I need  
I need the holiness seed!

(Verse One)

It's a 2-double-o-mighty seven  
a crazy fight going on in my life  
on whether I will go to hell or heaven...

Living a crazy life as the devil's kid  
never giving a care about anything in the  
world

as I threw my life away on a downward  
skid  
roaming the streets with so many powerful  
demons

on my left side and right  
shattering and terrorizing lives right on  
sight

I'm Lucifer's son's right hand man  
I've been given the power to make people  
understand  
but what you really don't know about the  
sinful life that I lead  
you see you can really hurt in the long run  
for me all the wicked ways and things I did  
was just a test in Lucifer's eyes  
as I heard so many unsaved souls in his  
evil kingdom cry...

everywhere I turned I bumped into his  
soldiers  
saying Lucifer, Lucifer, all hail the king of  
the world  
as all his evil demons float around him in  
a great big swirl

(Chorus)

I'm standing before the devil and God  
Looking at the book of my evil and good  
deeds

As the devil looks with a smile  
As my losing faith with God as my heart  
bleeds.

I tell the Lord that his kingdom in heaven  
is what I need  
I need the holiness seed!

(Verse Two)

the devil put me on the block to deal  
drugs,

gangbang, rob, steal, and kill  
'cause when he controls our minds  
we don't got no will...

he tells all his children, don't worry  
about the situations or the consequences  
when he says it's time to wake up  
and be ready to die in the 'hood

but all the adults in our lives will never  
understand

the frustrations in our own childhood  
as I was growing up my mind was evil  
and corrupted from the get go  
my life was in Lucifer's hands

and he was running this wicked show  
he filled my mind with soooo much  
of that crazy wickedness  
telling me that I can forget  
all about that happiness...

I thought that I could run and hide,  
but I couldn't and when he caught me  
he ripped my heart out of my side

I am one of his children now  
as he marked his number on my chest  
putting me in his special group  
with all the rest

he's always telling me that  
he's the king of the darkness looking for  
a soul

'cause everywhere he creeps

he is always on the low  
he tells me his name is L-u-c-i-f-e-r  
on that wicked microphone  
telling me to watch my back  
when I'm alone

(Chorus)

I'm standing before the devil and God  
looking at the book of my evil and good  
deeds

as the devil looks with a smile  
as my losing faith with God as my heart  
bleeds.

I tell the Lord that his kingdom in heaven  
is what I need  
I need the holiness seed!

(Verse Three)

my Lord our God, I know  
I was a troubled and evil child  
never listening to my family  
as I was always running the streets and  
being so wild

but as I was getting older  
I didn't think that you loved or cared  
about me

and when I went to Lucifer  
he knew what I would turn out to be...

now that I look at my evil past

I know that if I stay with him

I'll never last

everything that he told me in my youth  
was just a bunch of lies

now I hear your voice calling to me  
as I sit on the corner and cry

I don't want to be Lucifer's puppet  
anymore

I need you to guide me to your holy ways  
so I can find your kingdom's door

(Chorus)

I'm standing before the devil and God  
looking at the book of my evil and good  
deeds

as the devil looks with a smile

as my losing faith with

God as my heart bleeds.

I tell the Lord that his kingdom in heaven  
is what I need

I need the holiness seed!

(Verse Four)

my savior Jesus Christ

I need you in my life right about now  
please my Lord Jesus

just teach me to pray and show me how  
'cause I now know that

only you can judge me for my crime  
and now I need a new life

and I need you to save my soul this time  
now as I drop to my knees I say please  
jesus come live in my heart 'cause I need  
you

and both of us can rebuke Lucifer  
in your name of the holy kingdom so he  
can pay his dues  
my mind is made up 'cause I want to serve  
you

till the day I die  
and stop listening to all of Lucifer's lies  
'cause when you and I confront him  
we'll hit him with a powerful and holy  
attack

that will knock him off his feet that's so  
strong

he'll be laying on his back...

now I truly believe  
that you love me with all your heart  
as you waited for me to take my first step  
and receive you at the start

I hear you knocking at my door  
but I can't reach it 'cause I got this ankle  
chain

on my foot that's sealed to the floor  
when the time comes and you open the  
book of life

I want to see my name written in it  
and be with you on judgment day  
so you can see I turned my life around to  
serve you

and now you'll know my dues were paid...

now I know that you died

on the cross for all of us

I can feel your love in my heart

and your word is now all that I trust

so my question to you is  
will I go to hell or heaven??

(Chorus)

I'm standing before the devil and God  
looking at the book of my evil and good  
deeds

as the devil looks with a smile  
as my losing faith with God as my heart  
bleeds.

I tell the Lord that his kingdom in heaven  
is what I need

I need the holiness seed!

*That Three Strikes Law should make you wake up and realize that if you do something hecka, hecka bad then you'll get what's coming, but there are ways to avoid that law and that's to get off Satan's streets and find something more positive to do with your life!*

*check out the rest of Sir Turtle's BWO piece on page 75*